

By Mrs Collyer.

FELICIA
TO
CHARLOTTE:
BEING
LETTERS
FROM A
Young LADY in the Country,
TO
Her FRIEND in Town.

CONTAINING

A Series of the most interesting Events, interspersed
with Moral Reflections; chiefly tending to prove
that the *Seeds of Virtue* are implanted in the
Mind of every Reasonable Being.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By the EDITOR of the DEATH of ABEL.

D U B L I N:

Printed for D. CHAMBERLAIN, in Dame-street;
and J. WILLIAMS in Skinner-row.
MDCCCLXV.

THE
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 A
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 WHO
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 FOUND
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 IN
 HIS
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FELICIA
TO
CHARLOTTE.

LETTER I.

Dear MADAM,

AFTER a long journey that took up four days, I arrived last week at my aunt's, where, I suppose, I am to stay a considerable time; in which, I assure you, my chief uneasiness will consist in being separated from you; and that you may depend upon it, will be great enough o' conscience. However, to pass away some of my hours, which I foresee will lie pretty heavy upon my hands, I will send you an account of all that happens worth your notice: but you must not be offended if I tell you, I write as much to amuse myself as to please you; since this employment will not only be a recreation

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tion to me, but will flatter and sooth my friendship; and, in some measure, compensate for the want of your company. I shall always, while I am writing, think I am talking to you; and am even now delighted with the idea of that pleasing intercourse of minds we shall probably enjoy at this distance. How agreeable is the thought, that as often as you hear from me, you will learn every thing that passes in the soul of your friend; whilst I, in return, shall meet with the same proof of an open undisguised friendship from you! For my part, I intend to discover all the secret folds of my heart, and to unbosom myself to you without the least reserve, as I am persuaded I shall never have any secrets which you have not a right to be acquainted with, and which I shall not be very ready to communicate. Pray do you follow my example; write with the same unreserved freedom, and never disguise those little affairs in which your heart is concerned; for these things, I think, my friendship gives me a peculiar right to know.

I am now I don't know how many miles distant from dear London, the seat of your joys; and must not expect for a long time to see again the Mall, the play-house or the drawing-room; but I begin to fancy, that in a month or two I shall be reconciled to gloomy shades, tall trees, and murmuring brooks, and all the sylvan scenes which surround me; and even cease to regret my distance from the genteel diversions of the gay and polite world; for if plain and simple nature can ever appear agreeable, it must be here where she shews herself in all her beauties. What a change have I already undergone! I rise at least three or four hours sooner than ever I did in my life before; and even go to bed long before midnight. Instead of the rattling of coaches, I now hear only the rustling of leaves, or the warbling of birds; and instead of rich perfumes, my senses are regaled with the milder fragrance of nature.

Nay, prithee, my dear, don't laugh at me: I am neither poet nor lover, nor do I find that I am in the least danger of being either of them. You, I know, cannot perceive any charms in such a rude retreat,
fit

fit to engage the attention of a fine lady. Here are no powdered beaus, or guilt equipages, none of the splendid allurements, with which ladies of your vivacity are apt to be captivated: but for my part, a natural tincture of gravity may possibly make me more easily support the absence of what your gayer disposition may induce you to consider as the very essence of happiness.

My aunt, I find, is a lady of plain good sense, and of a most free, easy and engaging behaviour; but as to her person, it is far from being agreeable; her face is of an immoderate length; her eye-brows very large and very dark; and her nose of a more than ordinary size: but, notwithstanding this, she has an air of affability and good-nature spread over her countenance, which, at the first view, inspires every one that sees her with a pleasing confidence. Her easy condescending goodness, her sweetness, affability and complaisant freedom, diffuse over the minds of the meanest objects such a self-complacency, such an unreserved frankness of heart, as renders it impossible for them in her company to be stiffened by an uneasy constraint. The lowest being that bears the stamp of the human nature, is an object of her regard. She puts herself upon a level with them in her conversation, and even uses a language different from her own, in order to suit her discourse to their ideas, and to make them understand her advice, the consolation she offers them, and the friendly concern she feels for their happiness. As to her stature, it is something above the ordinary height, though she is a little awry; and, indeed, she has nothing about her that speaks the accomplished lady, though every body that sees her must immediately think, (I should rather say *feel*) her a very good one. In short, she is a woman of great prudence, and a perfect economist; and therefore her thoughts seem equally divided between the management of her own family, and a generous care for the welfare of those who apply to her for assistance. The education of her children makes up a great part of her felicity; it is a delightful employment which she knows how to render as agreeable to them as to herself.

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herself. The young ladies have been accustomed from their infancy to share with her in the delicate pleasure of communicating happiness, and have learnt from her, and an English Seneca, which they have almost by heart, the most engaging way of doing good. They have a small salary at their own disposal; and their good mother tells me, she often feels her heart glow with a secret pleasure at seeing them dry up the tears of the distressed, with that money with which they had intended to purchase some fashionable piece of vanity, or some ornamental trifle. The old gentleman, my uncle, who died about seven years ago, left her with four children, and a large estate, but very much encumbered with mortgages, which, by her prudent management, she has lately paid off. And she would now be very happy, had she not a son, whose brutal extravagance and debaucheries render her extremely anxious for his welfare. This young man is about eighteen, of a robust constitution, pretty fat, and with a countenance perfectly expressive of the dulness and stupidity of his mind, which has been too rough to be polished by a most free and liberal education; but as he is going to make the tour of Europe, I shall probably never have occasion to mention him again. The eldest daughter I have not seen yet, she being lately married to a gentleman at a considerable distance from hence. Amelia, her sister, is a lady agreeable in her person, and happy in the possession of a calm, yet sedate mind; her passions seem to be regular, her thoughts just, her language unaffected, soft, and flowing. After this short character, you cannot wonder that I no sooner knew her, than I conceived a friendship for her, which, I am persuaded, is now become reciprocal. Polly, the youngest daughter, is not quite ten years old; she is a lovely little creature, of a most promising genius, and has such an earnest thirst after knowledge, that her pretty questions frequently give me a very high satisfaction.

With these two young ladies, and some other agreeable companions, I spend great part of my time. The sun is no sooner risen, than we take a walk, and taste the freshness of the morning air, in some of those rural

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rural scenes which surround our house, while the innocent gaiety of my new friends give an alacrity to my spirits, which is greatly heightened by the softness of these early breezes, and the various scenes of natural beauty, which every way present themselves to our view.

But it is time to conclude, since I have written enough for my first letter, and therefore shall only add, what your affection will, I am sure, make you most solicitous to know; that is, that I am perfectly well, and have no other uneasiness than what arises from my distance from you,

I am,

Dear CHARLOTTE,

Your's most affectionately,

FELICIA.

LETTER II.

THE pleasure, dear Madam, you express at hearing from me, is such a proof of your affection, that I cannot help taking notice of it. The endearments of a friend have something so extremely charming in them, that it is impossible we should be insensible of their value. If flattery easily insinuates itself into our hearts, it is chiefly because it soothes our desire of pleasing; but how much sweeter are the caresses of a person on whose esteem we found our happiness, and whose satisfaction rebounds back, and gives us who confer it, a kind of self-approbation. So much for preface.

Two or three days after I sent you my letter, my cousin Amelia proposed our taking an airing in the coach, the next morning as soon as it was

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light, which we accordingly put in practice: but we had not gone far before the stillness of the air, and the novelty of the prospect to me, induced us to walk. A sandy rock, out of which was cut huge caverns that seemed ready to fall, was on our left, and by a delightful contrast, set off the spacious meadows and fields, which, on the right, extended to an inconceivable distance, where our sight was only bounded by a clear sky, that seemed to meet the ground, and in some places by hills, which could hardly be distinguished from the gilded clouds in which they wrapped themselves. Our eye at one view took in abundance of little villages, which arising from amidst the trees at a great distance, agreeably diversified this delightful landscape.*

Whilst we walked on, discoursing on several agreeable subjects, I observed that the scene presently changed, and the frightful precipices terminated in a high and steep hill, so full of tall trees and shrubs, that it formed a most delightful grove. The grass here was mixed with beds of violets and primroses, which diffused a charming fragrance through the air. Here we sat down to refresh ourselves, on the bank of a small fountain, which, with a gentle murmur, ran from a cavity under the hill, and after having drank some of the water out of a basin which was chained to the side of it, we struck into a narrow winding path, and began to mount the eminence to take in a larger view of the vernal beauties of this delightful scene; when I observed a fine river†, which, with serpentine meanders, added to the beauty of the whole. But while we were listening to the different warblings of a number of birds of various kinds, and observing the rabbits scudding along, and skipping at our approach into their burrows, we were interrupted from our contem-

* *Let this description should be thought romantic, the editor thinks himself obliged to inform the public, that this and the rest of the landscapes, are actually situated near Nottingham; and that these ladies, he supposes, resided in a village not far distant from that town.*

† *The river Trent.*

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plation of these trifling amusements by a voice that at once seized and fixed our attention; for we were near enough to hear distinctly every word, though when we looked around us, we could discover no human object near. The unknown person seemed engaged in a contemplation of the harmony of nature, and with a soft, yet manly voice, spoke the following rhapsody.

" *O nature!* how beautiful, how lovely are all thy works! with what pleasure do I gaze around, and view the vast profusion of wisdom, and infinite skill that surrounds me!—Blessed retreat! where every object leads me to explore that bounteous author of all goodness, who thus distributes his favours to men, and thus teacheth us to concur with him in promoting the universal good. While heaven, all-communicative heaven, thus profusely showers down its blessings, and imparts to us all that can charm our senses, or ravish our grateful minds with innocent delight, shall we with contracted hearts confine our pleasures to the narrow limits of selfish passions, and not rather exert our utmost abilities in order to disperse a flood of joy, and render the beautiful, the harmonious scene complete?—But ah! how small a share can I contribute to the great design? Lost in a manner amidst the immensity of nature, like a single flower amidst the numberless number which enamel this verdant carpet, or a small plant in this vernal landscape, too minute singly to gain the attention, and which could not be missed out of the blooming scene!——But why do I complain? Am I not sufficiently happy, if, amidst the works of my Creator, I can like them, by fulfilling the duties of my narrow sphere, promote the general splendor and harmony of the whole. If the inanimate creation can bestow such pleasures to a rational mind, how much nobler must be the satisfaction with which superior beings view the beautiful order of the more noble, the intellectual world, when the passions and inclinations of the mind compose an harmonious scene, infinitely more lovely than the finest and most elegant dispositions of matter."

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Here the voice stopped : perhaps we were discovered through the trees, and the unknown person was displeased in being interrupted in his private reverie. However, curiosity made us proceed ; for I was very desirous of knowing the stranger, whose sentiments and language had prejudiced me very much in his favour.

I do not know, my dear, what you will think of our adventure ; but for my part I formed a most amiable idea of the person of this stranger, though I had never seen him ; and his words made such an impression upon my heart, that I believe I have repeated every syllable ; but the graceful manner, and the music of his voice, are what I can never give you the least idea of ; for upon my word they were quite inexpressible.

Amelia endeavoured now to persuade me to return, but I was too much charmed with what I had heard, to consent to do it immediately. Prompted by a little female curiosity, I resolved, if possible, to steal at least one view of this stranger, which I did not doubt but I might easily do without being perceived. She laughed at my motive ; but, however, at my entreaties, consented to follow me. I then struck into one of the winding paths which lay on the side from whence I heard the voice ; but had not gone far, when looking back, I missed my companion. This at once alarmed me, and made me very uneasy, both on her account and my own.—— I stood still—— I listened.—— I returned back, stopping every moment to look around me ; but just as I regained the place from whence I engaged her to accompany me in this foolish expedition, I heard a rustling of the leaves at a small distance, when my heart suddenly leaped with joy at the thought of having found again my friend : but I was quite mistaken ; for instead of her, a young man appeared from amidst the boughs. He came to me with an air of respect.—— But I shall forbear giving a description of his person, till I can give you that of his mind, and that must not be till I know him better ; which I hope will not be long. However, I must tell you, that I believe it was the same who had a few minutes before
so,

so agreeably engaged my attention. He no sooner came up to me, than he observed the disorder of my countenance, which in a moment was imprinted upon his, when making me a low bow, May I presume to ask, Madam, said he, with a trembling voice, and a most expressive look, what it is that discomposes you? Are you alone? Yes, Sir, returned I, I have lost my companion, a young lady, who, I imagine, is in equal pain to find me. Well, Madam, replied he, with an ingenuous look, might I hope that you would put yourself under the protection of a stranger, I would gladly offer my service to wait upon you, till you re-join the lady. Here he glanced his eyes upon me as if to anticipate my answer; but immediately cast them down to the ground, and I think a sigh escaped him.

Though I was under no apprehension as to the behaviour of this young gentleman, yet I could not help hesitating a little to consider what answer I should make him. I was apprehensive, that should my cousin find me in his company, she might think I avoided her with design; and this might possibly not only disgust her, but give her some thoughts to my prejudice. Besides, in the opinion of the world, it might not be thought decent for me to be found so early, and in such a retired place, with a man whom I had never seen before; to whose character I must confess myself an utter stranger. But these reflections would doubtless have given way to my inclinations, had not the young gentleman, perceiving that I continued silent, resumed: I see, Madam, you are afraid of trusting yourself with me; I cannot blame your caution, and will therefore leave you, in order to seek the lady whose absence seems to give you some pain; and shall think myself very happy, if my endeavours should restore your quiet. This is a very obliging proposal, Sir, returned I; and I gladly take you at your word; mean while I will wait here to learn your success: but I am ashamed to give you this trouble. I have no other trouble, Madam, returned he, than in separating myself from you. But I ought not to complain, since it is to serve you.

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Here he retired ; but had not been gone long before I saw him return with precipitation, when he told me that he saw a lady walking down the hill, on which I permitted him to conduct me out of the wood, took my leave of him, and presently rejoined her.

Amelia was too angry with me to forbear reproaching me for the uneasiness I had given her, though she expressed her resentment in the most obliging terms ; but was soon pacified when she found it was done without design, and I had been equally troubled on her account. And indeed my uneasiness had been a sufficient punishment for my indiscretion.—— But I have troubled you too long with things of no consequence, and will only add that we made haste to our coach, and were drove home to breakfast.

Pray give my respects where due, and do me the justice to think me,

Dear CHARLOTTE,

The sincerest and

Most affectionate of your Friends,

FELICIA.

LETTER III.

WELL, well, my dear, you may be as merry as you will with my romantic adventure, as you are pleased to call it.—— I do not wonder at your laughing at me ; for I had penetration enough to foresee it ; however, that could not prevent my giving you a faithful account of this extraordinary ramble ; for I had rather you should be a little merry at my expense, than I be such a rebel to friendship, as to conceal any of my pleasures or pains from you. But if what I related in my last may appear too trifling to deserve

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deserve your notice, I do not doubt but I shall soon atone for the trouble I have given you in reading it, by describing scenes more interesting.

The person you are pleased, in the gaiety of your heart, to call some sylvan deity, who you suppose inhabits the enchanting groves, the Arcadian scenes you say I have described, is a mere earthly being, as very a mortal as you or I; and the native beauties of this rural retreat, notwithstanding what you are pleased to insinuate to the contrary, are so far from being heightened by my description, that were you with me, you would hardly think I had done them justice. But while you are attracted by the charms of your young admirer's dress and splendid equipage, and dazzled with the gaiety of a court, no wonder you think these humbler scenes, these innocent and simple charms which please me, are almost wholly fictitious, and little else but the invention of a luxuriant fancy,——a sort of fairy-land that exists no where but in my own imagination.

I saw the amiable youth I am now to describe to you at church last Sunday. The moment I cast my eyes upon him, I observed his fixed upon me; and to make an ingenuous confession, I felt my heart instantly flutter with a very agreeable emotion. I had for several days longed to see him, and could not now help feeling a secret joy, at finding my wishes granted. But I observed at the same time that he was in no danger of appearing singular by the regards he cast upon me; for as I was the gayest lady in the whole assembly, every body, as soon as I rose up, incessantly gazed at me. When the service was over, I grew impatient to know if he would speak to me; I fancied he would, at least I wished it. I saw him wait at the door—I saw it with pleasure, and went out with my aunt and cousins, filled with a formidable idea of his perfections. But how was I mortified, when after having addressed himself to my aunt and her daughters, and paid them some civil compliments, he took his leave, only making me a low bow, even without opening his lips to me.

Could any thing, Madam, be more provoking than this behaviour? Not that I was in love with him (at least I was resolved not to think I was)—but to see him
so

so insensible of my attractions?—intollerable—not to say one civil thing to me!—what stupidity!—if I had been ever so ugly, he could have done no more.—But however awkward this fit of resentment may appear in me, especially while I declare that I have my heart in my own possession, yet I had in reality some reason for it. There is certainly a pleasure in thinking ourselves beloved by a man of sense; and if I was not actually in love, I had a very great ambition of making him so. He would have been a most agreeable conquest, and I should doubtless have thought his addressee a greater honour than those of a thousand coxcombs.

The next day, however, I had the pleasure of seeing him at my aunt's, and could not help flattering myself that I was the cause of his visit. We had just dined, and Amelia, having taken up one of the volumes of the *Spectator*, was reading the affecting story of Ince and Yarico, when he entered the parlour, and paying us some compliments, seated himself near the door, desiring at the same time that he might not interrupt our entertainment. As my cousin had been used to treat him with all imaginable freedom, she concluded her story, and we entered upon a conversation on the nature of ingratitude; a subject that afforded the young gentleman a happy opportunity of discovering the delicacy of his sentiments. He said a thousand things equally entertaining and instructive, and enlivened his discourse with abundance of tender, generous and manly thoughts: but at last my aunt being called out of the room, her daughters soon followed her. I was now in the most desirable situation, and began to prepare myself for hearing a conversation infinitely more interesting. But how great, how inconceivable was my surprise to find the person who a minute before entertained us with such elegance of thought and expression, instantly become speechless. After fixing his eyes upon me for some time, he arose, and with an air that expressed a tender diffidence changed his seat, and sat near me; but still continued silent. His eyes, which had a remarkable languor, and a pleasing softness were still fixed upon me; but I no sooner met his glances, than with a disordered look he cast them to the floor. I endeavoured in vain
to

to resume the conversation ; he replied with such a tender diffidence as would not suffer him to proceed. His words faltered on his lips, and were uttered with so much confusion, that it was not difficult to observe the struggle he had with his heart, and the pleasing source of his embarrassment.

Ah! Madam, could I desire a more agreeable triumph? You perhaps, had you been in my place, would have laughed heartily at seeing him look silly ; would have ridiculed this softness of soul, and with your usual sprightliness have diverted yourself at beholding a man so over-awed by your charms, as to give such proofs of his weakness before you. And, indeed, can any thing more agreeably flatter our vanity, or give us a higher opinion of our own attractions, than to see them make a fool of good sense, and strike eloquence itself dumb? But alas! I found myself little disposed to assume any such airs of barbarous gaiety. I was not much less weak than he, and could not help pitying, as well as blaming, that modest diffidence which gave him such pain ; but this was a pity that was attended with a most exquisite pleasure ; nor could I indeed have felt a greater at seeing him at my feet, had he even assumed the buskin, and entertained me with all the lofty and melting language of a hero in tragedy. Not all the passionate rants of a lover, who would persuade me to the folly of believing he was dying at my feet, and that his fate depended upon my smiles or frowns, could have given me half the proofs of a sincere passion that I now received.

As I promised to give you some idea of his perfections, I will endeavour to do it now ; his silence left me at full liberty to examine his person, and I made use of this opportunity of doing it with the utmost freedom, and therefore without the least flattery I shall give you his portrait as follows :

You must know then, that he is about twenty ; and as to his stature, not much taller than I am : which, by the way, is much too short for the hero of a romance, who ought at least to be six feet high. His complexion is lively ; his eyes blue and sparkling, and so very expressive, that they seem to discover in the strongest manner

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manner all the sensations of his heart. A heart that I believe would be a great loser, had it not so true an interpreter to read all its emotions visible; since in his open countenance is painted an ingenuous honesty; the most lively traces of all that is humane, friendly and benevolent, mixed with an engaging modesty and simplicity of manners. His hair (for he is so unpolite as not to wear a wig) is of a dark Brunette, and hangs in natural curls, which just touch his shoulders. As to his thoughts, they seem bent on the improvement of his mind; and the love of truth and virtue (antiquated perfections!) are so deeply impressed there, that he seems to have very little idea of those fancied charms, those fashionable accomplishments, which are necessary to form the character of the fine gentleman. Nay, the awkward creature does not appear to have the least notion of the art of handling a snuff-box with a grace; does not even know how to murder the reputation of those who are absent, or flatter those who are present. And though he seems very assiduous to please me, he has not, I can tell you, had the complaisance to let me know that he thinks I have more charms than his old grandmother.

You have now, my dear Charlotte, a right to form what judgment you please upon the picture I have drawn. The modest rusticity of my spark, so very different from the confident addresses of the town beaux, must make him seem a very odd sort of a creature to you, who are so used to hear yourself praised in lofty strains, that you will, perhaps, be surprized that there should be any other way of touching the heart. But for my part, however ridiculous his behaviour may appear to you, I cannot help telling you, that I found myself exceedingly moved with that tender diffidence, and melting confusion, which, in spite of himself, discovered what I am persuaded he would very gladly have concealed. His silence itself, added to the several tender emotions I observed in his countenance, made some strange advances in my heart; and, to be sincere, I do not know what may be the effect of two or three more such tender interviews.

After

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After this frank confession, I know you are more inclined to laugh at me, than at him. ——— Do so if you please ——— I shall find an opportunity of laughing at you in my turn. ——— But to proceed; my aunt at last rejoined us after an hour's absence, in which time I had not one gallant thing said to me, not a syllable that could tell me he was my lover: every declaration of this kind was perfectly involuntary; nor do I know when he will have resolution enough to unburthen his heart to me. But however merry you may make yourself at this letter, I dare say you will be pleased with the confidence I repose in you, and with the fresh assurances I make you of being,

Dear MADAM,

Your most sincere

And affectionate Friend,

FELICIA.

LETTER IV.

Dear CHARLOTTE,

I DON'T think there is any occasion to make an apology for sending you this so soon after my last, tho' I have not yet received an answer to it. I know you are always glad to hear from me, and therefore, without ceremony, I follow the dictates of my heart, which lead me to communicate every thing to you, that I have reason to flatter myself will be an agreeable amusement.

A few days ago my aunt having engaged to spend a day or two with an elderly gentleman and lady, who live at a village a few miles distant from our house, they made me one of the party, and we accordingly

ingly set out in the coach as soon as we had drank tea. The old gentleman who expected us, met us with his pipe in his mouth, and in an agreeable friendly manner, paid us the compliments of his house before we arrived at it, smoaking all the way at the coach door. As soon as we entered his house, the unreserved behaviour of these old people rendered their company very agreeable. The old 'squire enlivened the conversation with abundance of merry stories, which his humorous and pleasant manner rendered vastly diverting. But the worst part of our entertainment consisted in our being obliged to bear with the impertinence of an old maiden lady, the gentleman's sister, who, out of an affectation of extraordinary piety and prudence, joined to an awkward air of over-strained modesty, assumed an authority that made her perfectly ridiculous. You never in all your life, I dare say, beheld so complete a prude. She would insinuate that there was a double meaning in the most innocent expressions, and would frequently set us upon searching for an indecent thought, where, I dare say, none but herself ever had any. This was the censor of the company, from whom our facetious friend often met with a sharp reprimand. Fie, fie, would she frequently cry, interrupting him, tossing up her head, and giving him a look of supercilious disdain, I protest you make me blush. This is quite intolerable. And the next minute she would add, Faugh! I vow I cannot bear to hear your beastly smut. Really you will oblige me to leave the room. But the best of it was, that this gentleman's obscenity was like some people's wit, with this difference only, that as no body can see that but themselves, so none of the company could find him guilty of a want of decency, but this experienced maid. Besides, her comments were a hundred times worse than the text. She must certainly have a most fruitful invention, as well as a very unchaste cast of mind, or else, I think it hardly possible that she should be so very intelligent in things, which it is the greatest glory of ladies in our circumstances not to understand. Modesty is the distinguished virtue of our sex; nor can a gentleman violate it in our presence, without being guilty of an unpardonable rudeness; but

but this virtue will never teach us to torture words and syllables to make them speak a sense which the speaker had not the least idea of. This would be to act entirely inconsistent with that love of decency we make pretensions to.

But to return to our prude. You would have laughed to hear her (while with an air of the most ridiculous affectation she drew up her mouth) express her aversion for the nasty filthy creatures, the men. She is surprised that our sex can be so imprudent as to marry. And though she has had the greatest and most advantageous offers (which, by the way, her small remains of beauty and sense would not tempt one to believe) she could never be prevailed upon so much as to think with patience on the nasty odious things.

Severe as this lady was upon the old gentleman, he was not much behind her in his replies, in which he rallied her so agreeably, that I could almost have forgiven her impertinence on account of the pleasant remarks it occasioned.

As soon as dinner was over, she began with a severe censure upon the weakness and depravity of human nature, which opened the way for abundance of devout scandal and pious defamation. And as this gave her a happy occasion of mentioning, by way of illustration, the real or imaginary vices of her neighbourhood, she seemed to talk on this subject with an unusual satisfaction. Her immaculate soul triumphed over the crimes of the multitude, and made her look down on them with a sacred indignation. Every foible was represented in the most glaring light, and a reason given for all the accidents which had happened within her notice. Elated with the most pompous ideas of her own spotless virtue, she pretended to know, why one was thrown from his horse, why another was robbed, or another lay dangerously ill of a fever, and pointed out the respective crimes which were the cause of each disaster; while her misfortunes, on the contrary, were only the trials of an indulgent providence. What an admirable artifice to extinguish the generous impressions of humanity, and to render the heart insensible of pity! to blot out all the traces of the Deity, and stamp the brute on the
reasonable

reasonable soul! But what, if possible, added to the cruelty and inhumanity of her slanders was, her indirect insinuations, artfully mixed with a pretended air of friendship, which were a greater insult on those she aspersed, than her more open invectives. Alas! cried she with a sigh, who would think that my dear friend——I won't mention her name——my regard for her will not suffer me to do that——but she does not live many doors from us——I say, who would think so fine a lady, with such a modest and artless look, was not as perfect in her virtue, as she is in the symmetry of her person. But I am glad she has kept her folly to herself; and indeed am too much her friend ever to divulge it. I have heard, indeed, a little whisper——but no matter what they say of her: I hope it only proceeds from malice and ill-nature.——O sic! how can people slander one another at this rate; to be sure it is very wicked of them.——

Yes, doubtless, Madam, replied the old gentleman, interrupting her with a sneer, we know you are very sensible of the malignity of this crime. Here he winked at my aunt, shrugging up his shoulders, and she proceeded.——Yes, heaven knows slander is my aversion, resumed she, and I would not for the world be guilty of it. What if she is not so slender as she used to be; she may be troubled with the dropsy, you know——I love to put the best construction upon every thing.

Slender! Madam, replied our old friend, smiling with an air of indignation; I saw that lady yesterday, and, upon my word, I never beheld a finer shape or a more easy air——I could not help taking particular notice of her. How! Sir, cried she, with a look that expressed her disappointment and confusion, I am persuaded you don't know who I mean. Yes, Madam, I do, returned he; and between you and me, however you conceal names, you are always sure to point your invectives in such a manner, that nobody can mistake the person they are levelled at. This shew of friendship is only a pretence, a specious artifice to wound the deeper. Don't you think, ladies, continued he, turning to us, that my sister, with her white unsullied virtue, must
appear

appear to great advantage, while she is surrounded by such a black neighbourhood. How beautiful must a swan look in the midst of a flock of ravens!

She was now as red as fire, and was doubtless going to make a severe reply, when, to my no small satisfaction, the conversation was diverted by a gentleman's entering the room, with a young lady of genteel appearance, and a person formed to prepossess every one in her favour. Our good-natured prude seemed a little confounded at their presence; but, soon recovering herself, ran to embrace the lady with such an appearance of sincerity, that I began to think her more capable of friendship than I had before imagined; but while she was lavishing upon this stranger the most ardent caresses, and, with an excess of complaisance, thanking her for her visit, my aunt told me, that this was the lady she had a minute before so cruelly aspersed under the character of a friend.

All this while I had not taken notice of the gentleman, who was brother to this injured lady; but when he came up to us, I was seized with a sudden flow of joy at seeing him the amiable youth I described to you in my last. But you can't imagine what an effect this discovery had upon me; the moment I cast my eyes upon his sister, and considered her as a lady vilely slandered by the person who was now embracing her, I could not, at first, forbear taking her part against the prude, and being highly offended at her hypocrisy; but now, when I considered her as the sister of this engaging youth, for whom I felt some of the most tender sentiments, I could not help regarding her as a monster, and entering into the injured lady's sufferings with a very different kind of indignation. The affront was become much nearer and more sensible than it was before. And indeed, nothing but my regard for peace could have prevented my cautioning her, whom I now considered as my friend, against one who could stab with a smile, and sting the person she hugged to her bosom. Lucius, for that is the young gentleman's name, saluted my aunt and cousins with an air the most free and engaging; but when he came to me, methought a timorous confusion rendered his compliments

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ments hardly intelligible. However, he took a chair, when the old 'squire, with his usual freedom, cried out, at the same time taking him by the hand, Well, my young philosopher, I am heartily glad to see you. Here is a lady in company has been degrading human nature most unmercifully, and has even asserted, that we have all a natural propensity to commit the blackest crimes. Ods my life, if I had been able to have managed an argument against her on such a difficult subject, I should have thought myself obliged to vindicate the honour of my own species; but now you are here, you must e'en do it for me. I am not willing to think myself a villain, nor would I maintain such an ill opinion of my friends.—But have you resolution enough, my boy, to vindicate your own sentiments when they oppose those of the ladies?

Yes, Sir, returned he smiling, when their honour is to be supported; but I hope there are none here that have really such unworthy thoughts of themselves and us. For my part, continued he, with an air perfectly graceful, I think there can't be a greater reflection on the Author of Nature, on his wisdom and goodness, on his spotless purity, than this opinion, which at once renders man an object of detestation and abhorrence, and his Creator unworthy the title of the father of his rational creation; a title which reflects a glory upon our species, and which springs from the most resplendent as well as endearing attribute of the Deity.

If we impartially survey the first impressions of nature, and the origin of our passions, we shall find that all those propensities which are not acquired, are on the side of virtue. The mind of the infant no sooner begins to open and expand, than he feels the dawn of reason; the bright radiant stream of heavenly light pours into his soul, and he sees at once the natural deformity of some actions, and the native charms and intrinsic loveliness of others. But even before reason can take place, and while this resplendent ray of the Deity is too glimmering to direct him in the paths of truth and virtue, he feels within him an internal and moral sense, which distinguishes between virtue and vice, beauty and deformity, harmony and discord. He is delight-
ed

ed with striking colours; he is charmed with the melting warbling of a well-touched instrument; he is terrified with the braying of an ass, a shriek, or a clap of thunder. But whence can arise these various sensations of pleasure, or of pain? Whence can spring these early ideas of harmony, proportion and beauty, if they are not founded in the constitution of nature, if there is not an internal sense, a natural taste by which they are qualified to discern them? Virtue is the music of the soul, the harmony of the passions; it is the order, the symmetry, the interior beauty of the mind; the source of the truest pleasures, the fountain of the sublimest and most perfect happiness. But let us have recourse to nature, and see if this is not the case. How early does the little creature feel sentiments of gratitude in return for the tender care of its nurse! How early is it intended by the social affections of pity and compassion! And how pleasingly does every natural gush of soft affection swell its breast, and pour from its pretty eyes!—But why does it experience these tender feelings of the soul? For what reason does the untaught mind start back from spectacles of violence and horror? Why is it moved with pity? Why is it shocked and wounded? Why does it bleed at miseries in which itself has no immediate concern? Is it not because it is naturally virtuous, naturally compassionate and sympathising?

What a delightful representation, cried Amelia with an expressive smile, have you given us of human nature! How very different from those gloomy discourses we daily hear of the wretchedness and deformity of all the race of Adam! Too many of our clergy seem to take a peculiar pleasure in degrading mankind, as if they thought there was no other way of exalting the Deity, than by debasing his offspring; and this they do by representing us as born in guilt, and naturally incapable of performing the least action, either virtuous in itself, or acceptable to our Maker. It is very true, replied my aunt; but in my opinion, nothing can be more injurious to the cause of virtue than such false representations. For my part, as I have carefully attended to the actions and behaviour of children, in their most early infancy, I can say from experience, that I have

never

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never beheld the least traces of this natural turpitude; which is the subject of so many pompous harangues; but as I can't be supposed to have carried my reflections of this kind so far as Lucius, who, I find, has made this subject his study, I shall desire him to run through the most particular of those vices, which are supposed to lurk in our hearts, in order to shew that they have no real existence in the constitution of our nature. But what you have said, Sir, added she, addressing herself to Lucius, brings to my mind a circumstance which may further illustrate your opinion of the moral sense, and prove, by a familiar instance, that it is really founded in nature, and not merely a plausible representation of what we only wish to be true. But not to keep you any longer in suspense; Some years ago, as I was at work in my parlour next the hall, I was alarmed at hearing somebody fall down stairs, and my daughter Polly giving a shriek at the same time, I ran in a terrible fright to assist my child. But with what surprize was I seized to see, instead of her, a young man, whom I had entertained the day before, lying upon the floor, who arose the moment I entered the hall. The dear little creature, who had been the instant before at play, stood speechless; she was struck with compassion; her lips were pale, her cheeks were wet with tears, her joints trembled. I pressed her to tell me what was the matter, but could obtain no other answer than, *The man! the man!* In short, her whole soul was in such an agony, that it was a long time before I brought her to herself.*

This

* *Though this story, however well attested, may appear very trifling to the inconsiderate part of mankind, yet it is really of consequence, since it seems at least to prove, that the doctrine of the moral sense has its foundation, not in wild chimeras, but in nature itself. Some very ingenious gentlemen have endeavoured to prove, that the emotion we feel at seeing a miserable object, has its rise from self-love, and proceeds only from our being suddenly led to place ourselves in the circumstances of the distressed person. But can it be supposed that a child, who has hardly any other ideas than those presented by its senses, at an age when the little creature*

This story, I assure you, is fact; and I would desire this lady, if she can, to account for this tender flow of benevolence and compassion in a child of three years old: an age in which, she herself must allow, that reason could have no share in the emotions of her heart.

Really, Madam, replied the religious prude, in a peevish tone, I am astonished to hear you. I thought you had been more orthodox than to assert such strange opinions. I am sorry to see that your fondness for your child has such an unhappy effect, as to shut your eyes against the truths of our religion. I will warrant you now you don't believe original Sin.—Don't we see every where the perverseness of children? But to be sure you won't see it——you don't know that they are given to lying, pride, and every vice they are capable of committing. One would think that experience alone would be sufficient to let us see that they are naturally wicked. Alas! continued she, with a ridiculous whine, and at the same time shaking her head, these are proud thoughts; it is but too true, that our nature is sadly depraved, and that we are naturally inclined to all manner of debauchery.

You must permit me, Madam, to dissent from your opinion, replied the engaging Lucius with a smile, and I think I am able to prove that nature, who has so early prejudiced the soul on the side of virtue, has not thrown in amongst her favours any of those baleful ingredients you mention. We receive nothing from the hands of the supreme Being which is not like himself, perfectly

creature is incapable of expressing its thoughts in words, and when it can slip out but a few of its perceptions; can it be supposed, I say, that a child in these circumstances can be thus capable of transferring itself, in idea, into the condition of another, and then drawing consequences from this act of the mind? This is very unlike their way of reasoning in all other cases.—But after all, the story itself may be regarded as a fiction, though I am assured it is not; however, if any one will take the pains carefully to examine the behaviour of children on such occasions, they will find reason enough from their own experience to confirm the above argument.

The Editor.

perfectly good.—Nothing that he might not communicate consistent with his infinite benevolence; and therefore all I can grant is, that this moral sense, like the light of reason, is not in every one *equally* strong, refined and delicate, though it is in all capable of directing to the pursuit of what is amiable and praiseworthy. As to the perverseness of children, their lying, pride, and whatever else you are pleased to lay to their charge, they are easily accounted for. They have not only ill examples, but are taught to be vicious. Pains are taken to make them so; and the fond mother, without design, acts as if she laboured to erase out of its mind the pure impressions of nature*. But I shall

* *The judicious Mr. Locke considers this subject in a very particular manner. "If we look into the common management of children, (says he) we shall have reason to wonder that there are any footsteps of virtue left in the world. What vice can be named which parents do not season them with, and drop into them the seeds of, as soon as they are capable to receive them? I don't mean by the examples they give, which is encouragement enough; but that which I would take notice of here, is the downright teaching them vice.—Give me a blow and I will beat him, is a lesson which most children every day hear;" this naturally fixes in their minds principles of revenge.—"They are taught to be proud of their cloaths long before they put them on," and to treat with contempt and insolence all who are not so well dressed as they; by which they render their hearts obdurate, and root out their natural sentiments of pity. "Lying and equivocations are put into the mouths of young people, and commended in children, whilst they are for their parents advantage." Their minds are enervated with flattery and luxury of every kind. "Is my young master a little out of order, the question is, What will my dear eat? What shall I get for thee? Every body's invention is set on work to find out something luscious and delicate enough to prevail over that want of appetite which nature has wisely ordered in the beginning of distempers to prevent their increase.—He had the will of his maid before he could speak or go; he had the mastery*

shall leave this subject, and endeavour to prove, that the several vices laid to our charge have not their source from nature.

Avarice, with all its black attendants, is confessedly a crime of old age, and seldom arrives at maturity till accompanied with grey hairs. Nor can it have the least foundation in the constitution of our frame, since it can only be completed by time, and a constant war with ourselves. Every object of real misery, every instance of virtue in distress, demands our relief with such a forcible eloquence, that we are obliged to struggle with ourselves in order to suppress our rising compassion. The natural feelings of the heart, which on these occasions prompt every man to pity, can't be erased without a degree of self-denial; a violence to reason; a violence to all the remains of humanity.

As to lewdness, nature must utterly disclaim it. — What man, that has the least remains of generosity, the least sense of pity, would not shudder at the thought of betraying the lovely innocent to guilt, and shame, and infamy? What man, that has not lost all the sense and understanding of a man, all the soft and noble impressions of humanity, and who was one step above a brute, would hesitate for a moment whether he should bridle or indulge an inclination, when the dreadful consequence lies so plainly before him — where mi-

*" mastery of his parents ever since he could prattle; and why
 " now he is grown up, and is stronger and wiser than he was
 " then, must he be restrained and curbed? — If his desires
 " carry him to wine and women, they are objects as suitable
 " to the longing of one of more years, as what he cried for
 " when little, were to the inclinations of a child." See
 Locke on Education, page 34—46. But innumerable
 are the methods of instilling vice into the flexible mind of the
 infant. Their rewards render them incorrigibly obstinate,
 their punishments make impressions never to be erased. The
 hobgoblin is ever after a subject of terror, and the poor
 unhappy wretch, who was to take them away when they
 were naughty, has fixed deeply a contempt and aversion for
 objects of misery and distress. The Editor.*

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fery, inevitable misery, must attend the partner of his pleasures?

But this is not all ; we have not only a moral sense, but a passion adapted to restrain our desires, and reduce them within proper bounds ; a passion suited to soften and reform our minds, by inspiring the tenderest, most noble and delicate sentiments. Here, giving me a look, he coloured, and, at the same time, suffered a sigh to escape him, but immediately endeavouring to recover himself from his confusion, which he strove in vain to conceal, he resumed——but the force of love almost every one has experienced.—Ay, ay, cried the old gentleman laughing, and I don't question but every one here has felt its power. For my part, when I was a young man, I was a perfect enamorado. Was you so? cried the old maid, therefore, because you were such a fool, you must think, to be sure, that I have been so too. No, Sir, I assure you, I was never guilty of that weakness. If love, Madam, is a weakness, replied Lucius with some warmth, it is at least the noblest weakness we are liable to. Love refines and humanizes the mind, gives a delicacy to our conceptions, and renders us incapable of injuring, even in thought, the dear object of our soft affections ; and, in fine, is a noble counterpoise to those desires which Providence has wisely given us, as it is directly calculated to prevent their carrying us beyond the bounds of reason and virtue. So the pleasing ties of friendship, mutual affection and public-spiritedness, whose charms are almost universally felt, are an additional guard against our degenerating into base, mercenary and selfish animals.

But as we have all these strong incitements to virtue, it may be asked, why there is such a great degree of vice in the world? I answer, that it is owing to education, the continual temptation of present and sensible objects, and the powerful force of example. These suspend the generous and kindly impressions of humanity, petrify the tender heart, and make us shut our eyes and ears to pity.

Here our old friend, who for some time seemed lost in the pleasure this conversation had given him, finding Lucius had done, arose up in a kind of extasy, when
holding

holding his pipe in his hand, he cried out in a theatrical tone :

- “ We are by nature virtuous, by nature soft and humane,
 “ Till selfish passions chill our young affections,
 “ And freeze the tender heart to icy hardness :
 “ No more distressed virtue swells our breasts ;
 “ No more we melt at others wants, and feel
 “ Those foreign cares with painful friendly smart
 “ And soft compassion. The inward struggle o’er,
 “ The conquest gain’d by the dire fury, vice,
 “ With Meducæan power we’re chang’d to stone,
 “ To lifeless, senseless stone.———”

Here, in the height of his rhapsody, he struck his pipe against the table, with a violence that made it fly into twenty pieces. The oddness of this whimsical behaviour made us immediately burst out a laughing, and in a moment dispersed that thoughtful air that our long attention to this grave discourse had spread over our faces.

I don’t know, my dear Charlotte, what idea this conversation will give you of this amiable youth ; nor can I tell how you will like his sentiments ; but this I am sure of, that you are very much obliged to me for being at all this pains in transcribing, what perhaps only my esteem for the speaker made me fancy something curious, though you perhaps may think it hardly worth your notice. You imagine now that I have got a very extraordinary memory ; but to be sincere, I have done little more than transcribe what my aunt prevailed upon Lucius to give her afterwards in writing upon the subject ; which he might easily recollect, as he was the chief speaker, and the sentiments entirely his own.

But all this while I had no opportunity of a moment’s separate conversation with this engaging young gentleman : my heart longed to be entertained with a more interesting subject ; a subject that would have been infinitely more delightful to me than the most refined speculations, though accompanied with all the charms of eloquence, all the striking graces which attended his

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manner of expressing himself. And I freely confess, that I could not help thinking him a little tedious, though my reason assented to every thing he said. But when he had done, the applause that was given him by almost all the company, so agreeably flattered my esteem, or if you insist upon it, I will say my *love*, that I never experienced half the delight it gave me, when in my vainest moments I have listened to the flattering praises of my admirers. But it is time to conclude this long letter, and therefore I shall only add, that I am,

Yours; &c.

FELICIA.

L E T T E R V.

My dear CHARLOTTE,

HOW inimitably pretty is your way of raillery ! I could not read your letter without breaking off at least half a dozen times to laugh at your whimsical conceits. But, however, you are never likely to see my spark in lawn sleeves, though you say there needs little more than for him to mount the rostrum to obtain them. — What a grotesque figure have you drawn of a gaping congregation listening to his voice, while the soul of music dwells upon his tongue, and all the ladies, charmed with his striking accents, surrender up their hearts, as I do, to the enchanting force of pleasing sounds and graceful action. Was that the case, I am of your mind. that amidst such a number of competitors, I might strive in vain to charm him ; and therefore, was there any danger of his entering into holy orders, I should certainly use all the influence I have over him to prevent a step that, you say, would be so dreadfully fatal to my own repose. But, raillery apart, I will now return to my story.

In

In the evening we left our merry hospitable friend, and returned home without Lucius's having an opportunity of saying one tender thing to me; but his eyes, however were less reserved, and methought entertained me with a language that I could easily understand. Ah! how much I love! cried they with a soft timidity: at least I fancied so: whilst an artless, sparkling glance of mine, in spite of myself, replied, how much am I pleased that you should do so. I know you can't keep your countenance at this mute kind of discourse; but really I am persuaded that it was very intelligible to us both, though it was so precipitate that nobody in the room could take notice of it. Why should we disguise our hearts, and teach our looks a reserve that we are far from feeling? These little arts should never be used to a man of sense and merit; as for the rest, we ought to have no care about them. Nor indeed need I blush to own, that this silent intercourse of souls gave me more pleasure than I ever received from any of my conquests. There is something noble in charming a youth of such exalted perfections; and however insensible we may be when attacked by the impertinence of a fop or a coxcomb, it would prove a want of the most laudable ambition not to be elated here, where fine sense, virtue, and an agreeable person, are so charmingly united.

As soon as we were seated in the coach, my aunt and cousins began to be very merry with the ridiculous character of the prude, when at last observing that I forbore joining in their conversation, Amelia tapped me hastily on the shoulder, What is the matter? cried she, with a pretty innocent giggle at seeing me start, one would be almost tempted to think you in love. Come, rouse yourself out of this reverie, and let us enjoy the benefit of your company. How do you like Lucius? Like him! replied I with a blush; why, I don't know, pretty well. She is thinking perhaps of her friends in town, cried my aunt; or is it really this gentleman that employs your thoughts? added she, addressing herself to me; Lucius is a very deserving man, and had he an estate any way equal to his merit, I could not wish you a greater happiness than to have him for a husband. I was not thinking of a husband, Ma-

dam, replied I, with as unconcerned an air as possible; but has he only a small fortune then? Pray what is his family? I suppose you can give me a particular account of it. This was spoke with an aching heart oppressed with fears; for I could not help being alarmed at the very thought of a disparity of circumstances; for tho' we may have ever so little ambition ourselves, our friends have always a great deal for us, and perhaps are apt to carry it a little too far. They do not think as we do, and are almost always blind to merit, when unattended with riches: for as they sincerely wish us every blessing, they cannot bear to think of our wanting so essential a one as that on which depends, in a great measure, the reputation, the ease, the honours of life; the most conspicuous and dazzling advantages!

My aunt, without any hesitation, replied, My dear, you are in the right; I have been perfectly acquainted with Lucius's family for many years, and am very able to give you their history. His father was born to a small estate; but what made this a real misfortune was, the very means which reduced his patrimony, gave him dispositions which rendered it the more difficult to support himself in the narrow bounds that were allotted him. He was educated amidst a round of pleasure; he saw nothing but luxury and extravagance from his most early infancy. He imbibed the same desires which had almost been the ruin of his father, and which has since had the same effect with respect to his own family. When he was between twenty and thirty, he paid his addresses to a young lady, who, besides a considerable fortune and much beauty, had a sweetness of soul, which gave a lustre to every other perfection. This was spread over her countenance, and appeared perfectly conspicuous in every look and every action. In short, he soon gained her affections, and, with the consent of her friends, married her. Poor woman! how much do I pity her! He no sooner got her fortune in his own hands; but in spite of his good sense (for this must be allowed him) he resumed those expensive diversions which he had before been obliged to lay aside, for want of the means of supporting them. The pleasures of the bottle, horse-races and gaming, have ever since taken
up

up all his time; while his poor lady is treated with a barbarous contempt and insolence; a cruel reward for her generosity in giving up her estate to him without reserve. But his son and daughter, far from following his example, shun the contagion of his vices as they would a pestilence, and for their sakes, as well as their mother's, I shall forbear giving a particular account of his debauches and irregularities. Alas! how unhappy, how doubly unhappy must such a parent be, who meets with the keenest reproach even from the virtues of his children! how miserable must that man be, if he has the least sense of ingenuity, to find himself the disgrace of those whom nature has rendered dear to him! an object of shame and pity to his own offspring! They love the man, though they detest his vices; and give him their affection, though they are constrained to withhold from him their esteem. But, dear Madam, cried I, with the tears standing in my eyes, which the darkness of the evening, however, concealed from observation, how does this admirable lady support this complicated distress? Can she have any tenderness for such a husband? One would think a conduct like this would undoubtedly extirpate all the softer passions from her breast, and leave no room for any thing but hatred and contempt. What other return can be made to ingratitude and cruelty?

No, my dear, replied my aunt, you have much too mean an opinion of this lady's goodness. There are very few in her circumstances indeed, who would not fly out into the greatest extravagancies, and keep no measures with a man who behaved with so little regard to the happiness of his family. They would make the house, whenever he was present, an almost perpetual scene of uproar; or at least would take all opportunities of publishing his vices and follies. But she, on the contrary, led by the sweetness of her temper, has endeavoured to make him sensible of the baseness of his conduct, by constantly shewing herself worthy of his esteem. She loves him still, in spite of his cruelty; and I dare say, would think herself very happy if the loss of her estate would recover his heart; even if to obtain this blessing they were reduced to a state of meanness

and poverty. She has too much good sense not to see that quarreling and ill-humour from her, would greatly increase his aversion for her company, and not only widen the breach between them, but be attended with the most unhappy effects with respect to their children; since it would infallibly weaken their mutual authority over them, make them divided, and become partners in their unhappy discords; and especially while they were young, might have withdrawn their affection from the man she loved more dearly than herself, and who, notwithstanding his ill conduct, had a right to their dutiful obedience. Had this been the case, it is easy to see the fatal consequences that would undoubtedly have followed, not the least of which would have been a want of education, a disregard of all instruction, and their being deprived of all those just principles of virtue and honour, which raise the man above the brute, and render him worthy of the character of a rational and social being; for they would probably have disregarded the advice of those whose quarrels gave them perpetual uneasiness. But this amiable lady's prudence is visible in nothing more than in concealing the follies of her husband, which she does with as much care as if they were more immediately her own. She endeavours to hide even his least foibles, not only from her children, but from all the world. And I think I may safely affirm, that no one ever heard her say an unkind or disrespectful word of him.

What an admirable character, Madam, replied I, have you given us of this charming lady! How happy would most women find themselves, if *they* were a tender of their husbands reputations! With what pain have I heard a lady, otherwise of good sense, expatiate for an hour together on the little trifling domestic quarrels which have happened between herself and her consort! How frequently do we hear married women dwell with a malicious satisfaction upon those vices, which prudence alone, without the least degree of love, ought to teach them to conceal! For a woman always stands, in some degree, in the same light with her husband, and she cannot certainly make him appear infamous, without throwing a load of disgrace upon herself; and
besides

besides this, people will always be ready secretly to imagine, that she herself must be guilty of some imprudence, which she dare not discover, that gave rise to the vices and injuries she so warmly exclaims against.

You are much in the right, my dear, returned my aunt; and I am very glad to hear you have such just sentiments, since I hope they will influence your own conduct, if ever you should be in circumstances to require it.

This conversation, which was drawn out to a considerable length, took up our time till we arrived at my aunt's. But I must not omit one particular, which indeed is too agreeable for me to conceal, which was, that Lucius and his sister had each of them a fortune of 5000 l. left them by a relation, who died a few months ago.

You see, Madam, with what confidence I lay open the disadvantageous circumstances of a family in whose happiness I interest myself; and can I give you a more convincing proof of the sincerity of my friendship? My father, notwithstanding his natural generosity and tenderness for me, will never, I am afraid, consent to my entering into an alliance so extremely beneath what my fortune may seem to require. I tremble at the thought of disobliging him, and am resolved, whatever it cost me, to conform myself to his will. However I may be mistaken. It is possible that a prospect of my happiness may outweigh all consideration of meaner interests and advantages.

Forgive me now, if you can, for troubling you with these melancholy thoughts, which I endeavour in vain to suppress. While this is the case, you must not wonder at my dulness, which, in my opinion, is less pardonable than impertinence, since the one may possibly make you smile at least, while the other can have no better effect than to give you the vapours, which if you can escape after reading this heavy epistle, I shall not despair of seeing you in my condition; that is, frequently amusing yourself with a dull walk, amidst dull trees, dull fields, and talking to your duller self; but Heaven preserve you from such a change. And may you ever

think me, as I really am, in spite of love, vapours and melancholy,

Your sincere Friend.

The moment I had written the first letter of that dear expressive word *friend*, by which I would always have you understand, whenever I make use of it, a thousand nameless ideas of affection, sympathy, and whatever you can imagine else most agreeable and endearing; I say, at the very instant I was concluding my letter, I heard Amelia enter my room, when turning my head, she told me with a smile, that the amiable Marilla was just come to pay us a visit; then immediately, forgetting what I was about, I arose with a heart full of joy, threw down my pen, and ran to embrace the sister of my dear——no, that is too fond; agreeable, I should say;——well then, of my agreeable Lucius. We had a great deal of chat upon abundance of entertaining topics, while my desire of engaging the friendship of this lady, made me discover an unusual gaiety; or rather, the friendship I had already conceived for her, threw off all my restraint, and made me treat her with the same open satisfaction, as if I had been convinced that she had already entertained the same friendship for me; so that in a little time we grew as intimate as if our acquaintance had been of a long standing. No reserve, no diffidence, no restraint subsisted between us; all our behaviour was frankness, vivacity, and the utmost extent of sprightly freedom. You yourself, my dear Charlotte, (forgive my saying so) had you unexpectedly come to see me, could hardly have made a greater change in the situation of my mind. How swift a progress does friendship make, when a person begins with such dispositions! A desire of being agreeable is the readiest way of making ourselves so.

My Aunt had not only invited this lady to see us at our last visit, but hearing me express an extreme desire of enjoying that satisfaction, at our return, sent the next day a letter to her mamma, unknown to me, to desire her to permit her to stay a day or two at our house. A favour that I could not help being highly sensible

sensible of; and from which you may judge of the pains she takes to make my stay in the country agreeable to me.

My new companion and I, not content with engrossing almost all the conversation to ourselves, resolved to take a little turn in the fields, to indulge our young friendship with discoursing on some subjects not proper for a mixed company, and therefore finding an opportunity of leaving our companions, we slipped into the garden, and from thence went into a retired walk, where we might lay open our hearts without the least restraint. A gentle breeze that whispered among the trees, the fragrance of the air, and the awful silence of the evening, contributed to soften my mind and charm my senses. The

——— Twilight grey
Had in her solemn livery all things clad:
——— While the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty———
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

M I L T O N.

We walked slowly on, at first discoursing upon indifferent subjects, till the amiable Marilla mentioned her brother, and told me he desired her to present his humble respects to me. This gave me an opportunity of asking how he did, and happily introduced a conversation more interesting than can well be conceived. I fancy, Miss, said I, you must be very happy in the friendship and tenderness of this gentleman; he seems possessed of extraordinary merit. Ah, Madam, returned she, I am more happy than can be imagined. He has an extreme affection for me, and there subsists such a harmony between us, as is very rarely seen in such near relations. It is his chief study to improve my mind; and he has taken inconceivable pains in giving me those just principles of virtue, which I hope will always influence my conduct. I find in him not only a brother but a sincere and affectionate friend. We have but one common interest. He trusts me with the secrets of his heart, and

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in short, we are so closely united, that were I unhappy, he would feel as much for me, as perhaps I should for myself. Well, my dear, replied I, (endeavouring still to discover whether she was acquainted with his passion) I could almost envy you the pleasure of enjoying these dear social delights. I never knew what it was to have a brother; and if I had, I might have been a stranger to your happiness. There are very few such brothers and sisters as you. Here I pressed her hand with much affection, charmed with the engaging idea she had given me of her own felicity. She was some minutes before she replied, and perhaps was at a loss for an answer; however, at last recovering herself, dear Miss, said she, I assure you it is an addition to my happiness, to find that you entertain such favourable sentiments of us. Lucius would be transported with joy, if he could have heard, from your lips, that he has any share in your esteem. It is true, he has some merit, a great deal more than I can boast of, since I owe great part of mine to him; yet you are pleased to honour me with your friendship, while he ——— She here appeared pretty much confused, and, as if at a loss how to proceed, stopped and stood silent; but at last, seeming to recollect herself, instead of going on, she resumed, Had he a fortune equal to yours, he would perhaps be better able to tell you himself those tender sentiments which swell his heart. Has Lucius then, replied I with an innocent tone and an air of astonishment, any sentiments which he is afraid to discover to me? I can scarcely believe it, though you yourself are pleased to tell me so. However, I have so just an opinion of his virtue and fine sense, that I hardly think him capable of saying any thing disagreeable. And may I tell him this? replied Marilla in a kind of ecstasy. Why not? returned I; it would be a great misfortune if we were never to be honoured with any company but such as were upon a level with us, with respect to fortune. A pride of this kind would be the greatest curse, since there are innumerable blessings in life, infinitely more valuable than all the advantages that can procure us. The charms of a virtuous and upright mind are internal; they constitute a real merit, and reflect a glory upon the possessor.

for. A glory in comparison of which all other advantages are superficial and trifling.

We were here interrupted by Amelia, who saw us go into the garden, and perceiving us at some distance, came running to rejoin us, with whom we presently returned home. And Marilla leaving us the next day, I have nothing further to add, than that I am,

Dear MADAM,

Your's most affectionately,

FELICIA.

L E T T E R VI.

Dear CHARLOTTE,

NOTWITHSTANDING the friendly congratulations you give me upon the late acquisition of fortune I received by the death of my uncle, I can assure you, with the utmost sincerity, that it gives me little or no pleasure. This I believe will surprise you, since, as you justly observe, I can't be supposed to grieve for the loss of a gentleman I have never seen, and who, consequently, can't have endeared himself to me by any of those proofs of affection we receive from those we frequently converse with. Nor would I have you believe that I am such a perfect stoic, as to be absolutely insensible of the grandeur, the riches and honours of life. These, it must be confessed, have seducing charms, and are apt to intoxicate our minds with the most pleasing prospects of future bliss. They naturally swell the imagination with high-wrought scenes of delight; nor can a person of my age receive them without feeling some engaging ideas that of homage, that respectful awe, which so agreeably flatters our vanity, that darling foible of youth! Gold, whose sovereign charms are universally felt, attracts every heart; all are delighted with the advantages it procures. Th

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grave philosopher too often sacrifices at this shrine; and the devout priest, who with such eloquent harangues on Sundays upon the contempt of riches, and with such a parade of learning and elegance of expressions, exhorts us to condemn the transitory enjoyments of life, those vanities, those baubles, those unsatisfying and pestilential goods, in spite of all his opprobrious epithets, is still captivated by this magic, and perhaps not one amongst them all would look with such insensibility on the acquisition of ten thousand pounds as I do.

After this long preamble, you possibly begin to wonder what I would be at, and are ready, perhaps, to imagine that I am either very vain, or else, that pleased too much with the solitude of a country life, I am become a sort of female hermit. But neither of these is the case.

I have not yet excluded all thoughts of making a gay appearance in life; nor do I find any charms in such a retirement, as would deprive me of an opportunity of being serviceable to my fellow creatures, and enjoying those social pleasures, which are some of the greatest sweeteners of life. But to be sincere, this long piece of slander, which may at first sight appear so injurious to the honour of philosophers and priests (I beg the clergy's pardon, priests and philosophers I should say, since the sacred character of the gown-men demands that I should give them the preference) this piece of slander, I say, was only introduced to raise your curiosity.

Ah! my Lucius, can I taste the sweets of a fortune, which will doubtless be a bar to my happiness, and render it impossible for me to be thine! This is a reflection which damps all my joy. Alas! how weak is ambition, when compared to love!

The day after Marilla left me, I had the pleasure of seeing her brother. He had an air of unusual satisfaction in his look; and perhaps encouraged by the repetition she had doubtless made him of that conversation I related in my last, in which I so freely confessed my regard for him; he spoke, methought, with less diffidence; his behaviour was more polite; his manner less constrained;

constrained; while a thousand tender nameless graces, which I had never discovered before, rendered him still dearer to my heart. I now felt myself insensibly awed by his presence, and in proportion as he became more unconstrained, I grew more thoughtful. I would gladly have resumed my usual gaiety, but it was impossible; the company of my aunt and cousins became burthensome, and I began to fear their discovering in my eyes that flow of tender friendship, that dear transporting extasy, which swelled my breast. To recover myself from this sweet disorder, I hastily arose, and retired into the garden, where I gave a loose to reflection without fear of being observed; I then began to revolve in my mind, the danger of indulging a passion, which would probably prove fatal to my repose, since I could not have the least prospect of its ever being countenanced by my father's approbation. I, therefore, blamed myself, and, after a long debate, resolved to use all my endeavours to conquer my growing weakness: but I had hardly formed this resolution when I saw Lucius enter the garden. I was then sitting in an arbour covered with woodbines, whose flowers embalmed the whispering breezes with a pleasing fragrance. He saw me, and immediately approaching with an air of respect, asked me if his company would not be a disagreeable interruption of my solitude? I replied, that as my thoughts were only engaged on trifles, it would be no pain to me to place them upon more agreeable subjects. But, why, Sir, added I smiling, have you left the ladies? I am obliged to return home, said he, and your aunt having this minute received a letter, I took the opportunity while she was reading it, of coming to take leave of you.

I now entirely forgot the resolution I had just taken to arm my heart with insensibility, and filled with a soft and pleasing surprise at the unexpected company of my lover, even a letter from London could not awake the least curiosity, though I did not doubt its coming from my father. Lucius now sat down by me upon the bank of camomile which almost surrounded the arbour, when I expected every moment to hear him enter upon the most delightful subject, love; but tho' he

he was more assured than ever I had seen him, the restraints of a modest diffidence still tied his tongue, and made him for some time preserve a silence which I did not care to interrupt. He opened his lips several times, but, quivering with fear, they instantly closed, without uttering a syllable; but at last, seeming to collect all his fortitude, Forgive me, Miss, said he, giving me a look inexpressibly tender; forgive a behaviour, which doubtless makes me appear extremely ridiculous; but it is impossible to——Here he cast down his eyes, with a sigh, while a flood of soft and melting ideas seemed to choak up his voice; but at last, finding I waited to hear him conclude, he lifted up his head, when I saw his face covered with a deep blush, while every feature was expressive of the most violent emotions. How impossible is it, dear Madam, resumed he, with a faltering voice, to give utterance to a passion too tender to be described——and too——too presumptuous to be forgiven, added he, with a look and tone that spoke the deepest despair.

During this speech, which, short as it was, took up a considerable time, methought I felt all the throbbings of his heart. I seemed conscious of all that dread, that love, and all those terrible apprehensions, which bewildered his thoughts in a maze of confusion, and made him tremble at a discovery, which, though he resolved to make, he dreaded the effects it might produce. But notwithstanding this sympathetic penetration, and all the disturbance it had a natural tendency to create, the very cause of my pain was the source of the tenderest and most exquisite pleasure; the softest and most soothing delight. As soon as he concluded, he waited for my reply in a kind of agonizing suspense; but though I was a moment at a loss how to return an answer, I suffered my eyes to express a pity and compassion capable of dispersing his most alarming fears, had he dared to have lifted up his to observe them. But when I spoke, a glance immediately met mine, which instantly brightening, seemed to discover my meaning before I could give it utterance. I assure you, Sir, said I in a mild tone, that I am not at all disposed to increase your confusion, by ridiculing the painful disorder

der which has accompanied this too tender declaration. I am sensible of your merit, and don't think you capable of an attempt to deceive me. Believe me, Sir, I look upon you as my friend, and therefore entreat you to reflect a little upon the obstacles that will inevitably oppose your wishes. However, I freely confess, if that will give you any satisfaction, that were I at my own disposal, you would, perhaps, have no reason to complain of my severity.

You can't conceive, my dear Charlotte, what a sudden change this obliging reply made on the countenance and behaviour of my lover.—— You are now ready to imagine that I shall describe him throwing himself at my feet, while with a flow of rapture, he admires my superlative goodness, blending his praises with two or three hundred adorables, transcendent excellencies, infinite perfections, incomparable creatures, and abundance of other fine things of the same strain; and that to conclude his panegyric, he tells me how astonished he is, that a goddess so heavenly fair, can have the condescension to cast the lustre of her brilliant eyes, and raise to life a wretch so contemptible, so absolutely beneath her least regard.—— But if these were your thoughts, you were extremely mistaken; for I did not hear him utter the least syllable of this sublime nonsense. He is too good a christian to deify his mistress, and has too good an opinion of me to think I should be pleased with such senseless homages. In short, in spite of his humility, his love was incapable of blinding him so far as to make him forget that I was a very woman still, a being of the same species with himself, and therefore he neither debased himself, nor attempted to please me with flattering praises.

After all, I am terribly afraid that I shall be unable to give you any tolerable idea of the conclusion of this affecting scene. The dreadful agitations, which were before so visible in every feature of his face, were now instantly changed to those of joy; a thick cloud that covered his eyes in a moment dispersed; they sparkled with unusual brightness, while gratitude and love, surprise and extasy, appeared in swift succession on his countenance,

countenance, and painted there all the motions of his heart. As despair had before kept him silent, the contrary passion had now the same effect; but as soon as he recovered his voice, giving me a look of tender surprize and delight, O my Felicia! cried he, in a most moving tone; and then after a pause of half a minute, O my dear Felicia! have I not offended you? Am I so happy, so exquisitely happy, as to have obtained your esteem? Yes, Sir, returned I (with an affected sprightliness, and endeavouring at the same time to conceal the tenderness of my looks, by holding down my head) I have a very great esteem for you; but not a greater than I am persuaded you will always deserve. But come (added I with a sigh, which for my life I could not conceal) let us go to my aunt; this conversation grows too tender.

Here I arose without waiting for an answer, while he followed me, at the same time begging my pardon, and saying he had forgot to tell me, that my aunt, seeing him going into the garden, desired him to let me know that she had something to say to me, which she fancied would not be disagreeable. This news put me in mind of the letter he had mentioned, and therefore fearing she might think me long, and perhaps form some suspicion at seeing us together, I desired him to make haste before, and tell her I was coming; but I had no sooner made this request, than I stumbled at the handle of a roller which reached to the border of the path, when seizing my hand to help me, (tho' I was in no danger of a fall) he squeezed it with an air of tenderness, and without seeming to know what he did, suddenly pressed it to his bosom; giving me a look at the same time so inexpressibly soft and moving, that I could not help being extremely affected by it; and indeed my cheeks were immediately covered with a blush, nor could I at this hasty emotion forbear giving a sigh, though I endeavoured all along to conceal these proofs of my sensibility. But the moment he took my hand from his breast, confounded at this sudden impulse of passion, which I believe would not permit him to think of what he did, he gave me a look which seemed to ask forgiveness, and trembling held my fingers

fingers with a fearful easy timidity; but finding I seemed not to observe him, and that I discovered no marks of resentment, joy again appeared in his looks, and he conducted me in the same manner to the house; with an air of extasy and delight. Nor, indeed, was I less happy than he; I easily comprehended the source of every pleasing impulse, and could with the same satisfaction have pressed his hand too, had not the laws of prudence and modest reserve forbid it.

It is well the prude I mentioned to you in one of my former letters, is not to see this; for these last lines would have made her lose all patience: but surely it can be no crime to act from nature, where virtue is our rule; and I am sure it is none, frankly to confess the innocent transports of our hearts to a friend. But if these natural sensations were indeed criminal, they soon suffered a shock that gave me no little pain.

We entered the house, with our minds filled with all the soothing ideas that could flow from a concurrence of the most delightful thoughts, when he let go my hand, and walked in before me; but my aunt no sooner saw me, than she cried out with an air that soon discovered her own satisfaction, and at the same time let me see, that she was pleased at thinking it in her power to contribute to mine; come, my dear, said she, I wish you joy. Here Amelia and Polly paid me the same compliment, and at the same instant came running in a friendly transport to embrace me; when at last, putting an end to their caresses, filled with an eager curiosity, Why do you wish me joy, Madam? cried I; pray explain yourself; have you a letter from London? Yes, child, returned she in an extasy, and your father tells me, that your uncle in the East-Indies has left you no less a sum than ten thousand pounds. How! added she, are you not pleased with the news! are there no charms in being a rich heiress! what an extravagant fortune are you like to have! ——— I now put on a forced smile, to prevent my giving her the mortification of seeing how coldly I received what she, with reason, imagined such a subject of joy. And, indeed, I could not have behaved otherwise without betraying the dearest secrets

crets of my heart. At the mention of ten thousand pounds I had been unable to disguise that thoughtfulness, which was suddenly spread over my face.—A painful thoughtfulness that was caused by the reflection,—had it but been Lucius that he had bestowed it upon, O then I might have a better prospect of being happy! Can I receive any satisfaction from a circumstance that widens still farther the distance between him and me? Here casting my eyes upon him, I found still greater reason to be filled with dislike at this painful splendid acquisition; he stood with his face towards me, leaning upon the back of a chair; his eyes were cast down with a dejected confusion, then lifting them up to the ceiling with an air of despair, I perceived his face pale, a tear rolled down his cheeks, which he endeavoured to conceal by hastily pulling out his handkerchief, and walking to the door, when having staid there a minute to recover himself, he suddenly took leave to return home.

What various, what strong, what cruel emotions was I now obliged to conceal? But this was not all, I was constrained to assume a gay appearance. Torturing deceit! I never felt a more painful situation, nor ever sure was an innocent disguise accompanied with such cruel anguish. I made these observations on Lucius's behaviour, while I seemed to be reading the letter which my aunt had given me, and though I began it again as soon as he left us, I read it over without knowing a word it contained, except my being assured that what my aunt had told was but too true.

You now see, my dear, what reason I have to be dissatisfied with what you have esteemed a subject of joy. Vain are all the prospects of advantage we fondly flatter ourselves with from the acquisition of wealth, the alluring prospects of a gay magnificence, the splendid appearances of ostentatious grandeur, while a thousand thwarting and controuling accidents can damp our highest and most raised expectations, and change the very objects of our delight into the most painful disquiets, the bitterest sources of discontent and trouble.

But

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But I find I am running on in a reflection, which, if I was to indulge it, might carry me to a tedious length; I shall therefore break off in time, and conclude with desiring you, Madam, to form an idea if you can, of that affection with which I subscribe myself,

Your sincerest Friend,

FELICIA

L E T T E R VII.

Dear MADAM,

THE interest you take in the unhappy situation of Lucius's affairs, and that obliging concern for the opposition you fear my father will make to my happiness, are such endearing proofs of your friendship, that I could not read your last letter without feeling my breast glow with the most charming mixture of delight and affection; and, indeed, what higher satisfaction can we feel than that which naturally springs from the approbation of a friend in an affair so tender, and so peculiarly interesting as that on which we fancy all our happiness is founded. The very passion you approve, is obliged to return the obligation; and it does so in the most effectual manner, by transferring some of its tender feelings to the person who thus sympathizes in its dearest sensations.

In spite of the probability of my father's ever being brought to give his approbation to our mutual affection, I could not think of losing Lucius, and banishing all thoughts of our future felicity, without a very painful affliction. I was willing to see him still, though I ought rather to have avoided his sight as much as possible, since his company could be of no other service than to strengthen a passion, which had already been but too deeply rooted in my heart. The admonitions of reason were of little effect; I was not disposed to listen to them; a more prevailing impulse made me long to

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to see him ; and not hearing from him for four tedious days, I wished with the greatest ardor for an opportunity of letting him know, that the new addition to my fortune had not made me less worthy of his esteem. This I fancied I ought to do in justice to myself, and formed abundance of plausible reasons, which made it appear absolutely necessary that I should thus set my own character in a true light. After the hopes I have already given him, said I to myself, can I suffer him to continue in an error so injurious to my tenderness, and even to my reputation too, as to think me of a soul so sordid, as to be puffed up with the advantages of superior wealth ; to think I can retract the encouragement I have given him, and to believe, that elated with pride, I can now regard him with an air of superiority and contempt ? No ; I can't bear that my dear Lucius should entertain an opinion of me which I so little deserve ; he shall know that if we must be separated, it is not my choice ; but a cruel force that renders it necessary. He shall know that I am still the same, that I am still as sensible of his merit as ever, and that were I at my own disposal, not all the riches of the universe could bribe me to entertain a thought fatal to his peace and happiness. But how, said I, recollecting myself, shall I have an opportunity of undeceiving him ? Does he not deprive me of the power of doing myself justice ? His fears prevent my giving him the satisfaction of making him those assurances, which, if I may judge of his tenderness by my own, would be highly agreeable to him. What then shall I do ? Shall I write ?——No ; I can never consent to that ; it would be too forward, and discover too great a fondness, for me to make the first advances. Suppose I write to Marilla, and let her know the struggle of contending passions, which fill my mind with such a multitude of various solitudes, and tender perplexities. Would not that be the same as writing to him, since she would doubtless shew him the letter ? But suppose I desire her to keep it a secret, what then will he be the better for it ? He will still be as ignorant of my thoughts as ever : well then, it will be to no purpose to write at all. Here I fixed, and resolved to leave him ignorant of all that I desired he should know, till

til a favourable opportunity offered, that would permit me to discover my sentiments in a less exceptionable manner; and I did not doubt but my aunt's friendship for him would soon lay before me an occasion of doing it, since she was too much pleased with his company and Marilla's, to dispense with their frequently giving her the satisfaction of enjoying their conversation.

These reflections I made in my chamber, when having at last resolved to arm myself with patience, I went down, and conversed with Amelia for some minutes; but finding a tender melancholy grow upon my spirits, I sought for an opportunity of indulging it. And, indeed, when we are in this disposition the company of the most agreeable friend becomes burthensome: I, therefore, gave her the slip, and retired into the fields to indulge at large the soothing softness of my own ideas.

You smile, my dear Charlotte, at seeing me become such an unsociable creature, as to prefer my own company to that of a friend. What a strange thing is love! but though I am grown infinitely fond of talking to myself, and walking under the shady covert of oaks and elms, yet I am not so perfect a lover as to hold a discourse with these inanimate beings; nor have I ever had the least inclination to carve the name of Lucius on their barks. I am not yet arrived to that degree of madness; nor, indeed, have I observed in any of my rambles any such lasting marks of my lover's extravagance.

I had not long enjoyed my retirement, when I saw a man crossing the neighbouring fields with precipitation; he at last came up to me, and with abundance of awkward scrapes, having asked my name, gave me a letter, and immediately retired. As soon as he was gone, I cast my eyes around to see if any body observed me; and full of a curiosity, which would not suffer me to stay till I got to my chamber, seated myself upon a bank of turf at the foot of a shady tree, which sufficiently concealed me, when hastily breaking open the letter, I had the satisfaction of seeing that it came from my dear Lucius. How tender and generous were his sentiments! how affectionate!—but the confidence which subsists between us, gives you a right to see the letter itself. I will,

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will, therefore, transcribe it, to oblige you; and I am sure if you have the least idea of my affection for this amiable youth, you will not be surpris'd, if I declare that I was charmed with it. But without any farther preamble, I found it as follows:

“ M A D A M,

“ **I**T is with the utmost confusion that I reflect upon your being a witness of the disorder I discovered in your aunt's at, what ought rather to be a subject of my joy. My hand trembles while I attempt to apologize for my behaviour. What words can I make use of to discover the sincerity, the ardour, the tenderness, the delicacy of my passion, when I have given you such reason to believe that it is the basest, the most mean and selfish? When I have given you such cause to think, that I have lost in myself, in the mean consideration of my own happiness, the tender regard which I ought to have for your's? But, O consider the towering hopes to which you had rais'd me! Consider the charming, the extatic flood of joy, which in a full tide of transporting rapture, rais'd me above myself, and seem'd to promise a felicity vast beyond what my vainest thoughts could have aspir'd to. Think but of the delight that must swell my heart, at being rais'd from the most gloomy despair of timorous love, to the unexpected extasy of seeing my fears vanish: of experiencing all the rapturous sweets of the most charming passion; all the joy that could flow from the most exquisite goodness, the most endearing condescension; and then, if it be possible, do but think of what I must feel, at finding, in one moment, my high-wrought felicity overturned, and myself thrown down from the eminence of my aspiring joy.

“ Forgive, dear Madam, my endeavouring thus to extenuate a behaviour, which has discover'd too great a regard for my happiness, too little for your's. If it has appear'd ungenerous and mercenary, nothing but surpris'e can excuse it, and nothing but surpris'e could make me, in this case, guilty of a conduct that makes it necessary for me to beg pardon. I have now conquered

conquered myself, and sincerely congratulate you with the rest of your friends, while, with a heart overflowing with your felicity, I forget my own miseries. But why do I mention misery? I shall have none while you are blessed: your happiness shall be mine too. All my satisfaction and delight shall spring from the pleasing contemplation of yours. What a delightful source of the noblest joy! I lose the too presumptuous title of your lover in that of your friend, and may I in that character have the satisfaction of seeing you as lastingly happy, as my fondest wishes would make you. May your virtue, with all those numberless graces, which make even that and religion appear with diviner charms, give you all those pure and noble delights, which it is not in the power of wealth to bestow, and may both together render you the happiest of mortals.

“But whither would my tender imagination carry me? I could dwell for ever on this delightful subject. My heart, warmed with your dear idea, would endeavour to make you sensible of what it feels for you. But how vast a disproportion is there between the swell of melting thought, and the flatness of words; they were formed to convey mere vulgar conceptions, or at most, emotions less strong and affecting; I, therefore, want a thousand nameless epithets to express the force of my friendship, the delightful impulses of my soul. But think not, dear Madam, that I have only gained a victory over a weak and feeble passion. Did you know with what a vast excess I have loved, you might perhaps form some idea of that painful struggle it has cost me to conquer the most ardent affection, and reduce it to the disinterested standard, of that more sober one, which becomes a friend. But I beg pardon for my impertinence, which I am afraid has offended you, and therefore beg leave to subscribe myself,

“MADAM,

“*Your most sincere*

“*And devoted Friend,*

“LUCIUS.”

As soon as I had run over the above letter, a sudden impulse of tenderness made me press it to my lips with a most pleasing extasy ;——Nay, you may laugh as much as you please; I kissed, I say, the dear characters with a transport of delight; kissed the senseless paper; and having pressed it to my heart, and secured it in that situation I arose and hastened to my chamber in order to peruse it more at my leisure. I there read it over several times, but could not help reflecting how much pleasure I lost by that painful awe, which prevented his uttering the melting softness of his heart when in my presence. With what extasy should I have heard such tender things from his lips, especially when assisted with the moving tone of his voice, and the more elegant language of his expressive countenance. I should then have been all rapture. However, I at last resolved to write an answer, when after having scrawled over about a dozen sheets of paper, without being able to please myself, I was obliged to lay aside my design.

I could not divest myself of that softness which his epistle had inspired me with; all my efforts to this purpose proved ineffectual. A pleasing langour, which hung upon my spirits, gave me such a sweet lethargy of thought, as rendered it impossible for me to express any other sentiments than those of my heart; and they were indeed too tender to be communicated, especially to a lover who wanted my father's approbation to give a sanction to his passion. The next morning however I was more composed, and therefore wrote the following letter, which I have not yet had an opportunity of sending to him.

“ *Poor* LUCIUS,

“ **W**ERE I disposed to triumph over the weakness of a lover, who in humble strains of soft complaint, lays himself at my mercy, I should perhaps find subject enough in your epistle to rally your passion, as well as your pretended victory over it. But I have at present no inclination to indulge such a savage gaiety, since it would probably give you pain. The flow of tender sentiments, that delicacy of passion, which makes you desire that I should
“ still

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I will preserve my esteem for you, and your disinterested and warm concern for my happiness, are so many proofs of your generosity and intrinsic merit, that I can't help feeling a very sensible pleasure every time I reflect upon them. Your confusion at my good fortune, which I confess I took particular notice of, was too natural for me to be very much offended at it; and indeed I have rather pitied than blamed your distress. The advantages we receive from wealth, are as superficial, I believe, as any we enjoy; and while they deprive us of that sincerity and unrestrained freedom, that openness of behaviour which persons in inferior circumstances receive from their friends, they strip us of the most engaging sweets of life; blessings, which not all the luxury of incumbering magnificence and studied splendor, not all the homage of empty ceremony, and servile submission, can atone for the want of. You see, Sir, I can moralize like any philosopher or divine, and you may possibly flatter yourself that you have taught me this doctrine. Do so if you please. I own my regard for you; and however romantic the platonic friendship you propose may appear, I readily accept of it, since that is all that either you or I ought to hope for. With my sincere respect to my good friend your sister, I am,

"S I R,

"*Your's &c.*

"FELICIA."

How many tender and affecting sentiments was I here obliged to suppress! I was afraid of discovering the secrets of my heart, though he would doubtless be transported to find that I was as capable of love as himself, and that he had inspired me with all that softness that could flow from the most passionate affection. But to you I have discovered all my weakness, and depend upon your friendship and good nature to keep it an inviolable secret, especially from my father, whose

52 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

goodness I am resolved never to abuse by the least act of disobedience.

I am,

Dear CHARLOTTE,

Most sincerely Your's,

FELICIA

L E T T E R VIII.

M A D A M,

THE satisfaction you discovered, at the little conversation-piece I gave you some account of in one of my former letters, makes me glad of an opportunity to vary my subject, and leave the tender tale of love for a theme that even one of your gay disposition will, I am sure, think equally entertaining and instructive.

The day after I sent you my last, we had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Mr. Stevens, the facetious old gentleman, whose character you are pretty well acquainted with. The afternoon was spent very agreeably; but before he took leave, my aunt, who still takes all imaginable pains to contribute to my satisfaction, by diversifying my amusements, proposed our making a short excursion the next day to a nobleman's seat, at a great distance from us. I have observed, said she, smiling, that my niece appears very much delighted with this part of the country; she seems fond of agreeable landscapes, and my desire of retaining her here as long as possible, makes me willing to gratify this taste, by shewing her such as I don't doubt but she will think agreeable. Will you, Sir, contribute to her satisfaction on and our's, by giving us your company to-morrow. We are apt to be weary of the company of those we daily converse with; but a friend of your gaiety will enliven our conversation, and find us constant matter for exercising our wit, and rendering us even more agreeable to ourselves. Mr. Stevens reply'd to the compliment

compliment in a very handsome manner; and at the same time added greatly to the pleasure I had in proposing, by saying that if it would not be disagreeable, he would increase our number by bringing Lucius, and another friend with him, whose company he fancied would make our satisfaction complete. When my aunt reply'd for us all, that we gladly accepted his offer, and that she was sure the gentleman's being his friend, would be a sufficient recommendation to us.

The next day before dinner we had the pleasure of seeing our old friend return accompanied by a young clergyman his relation, who had just finished his studies at Cambridge, and the engaging Lucius. Our repast was short, and that being over, we set out in two coaches. But I shall not attempt to give a particular description of all the new and uncommon prospects which discover themselves in this delightful part of the country, where nature with a liberal hand pours out her favours, and with a profusion of frolic bounty, spreads a wildness equally extravagant and pleasing. I pass over the beautiful landscapes we drove through in this agreeable tour, for no other reason than because the view I had of them was too sudden to render me capable of describing them; besides, were it possible for me to do it to advantage, their being so perfectly extraordinary might reflect a little upon my veracity, and make you imagine that my descriptions were too uncommon to have any real existence in nature.

Are you not surpris'd now, my dear Charlotte, that I can all this while forbear speaking of my dear Lucius, since there is certainly a very exquisite pleasure in talking of the man we love: but the reason of my not mentioning him was, that as he went in the other coach, he could only give me now and then a glance, which seem'd to express a troublesome kind of diffidence and suspense, which I fancied arose from his longing to know what reception I gave his letter, and a fear lest he had said any thing in it that had offended me. At last, however, arriving at the park of my Lord M***, we agreed to walk to the house. As soon as I stepped out of the coach, I could not help being extremely delighted with the agreeable scene which lay before us, and

which I can't, for my life, help giving you some description of. Here the intermixture of dusky groves and lightsome plains; of woods impervious to the rays of the sun, which now spread his chearing beams around us, and the agreeable openings which discovered the bounding deer flying to the covert of the shady thicket presented a landscape the most pleasingly rural, and worthy the attention of the most curious observer while we found ourselves at the entrance of a grand walk, which extending to a prodigious length, grew insensibly narrower, till closing in perspective, the vista seemed lost in the grove, out of which arose several lofty stone turrets, which I afterwards found were part of a magnificent Gothic edifice, built after a most extraordinary taste. In short, the whole scene, notwithstanding its being very delightful, had such a romantic appearance, that for some minutes I could think of nothing but castles and embowering shades.

The company was no sooner joined, than after some compliments from the gentlemen in the other coach, and their desiring to know my opinion of the tour we had taken, we fell insensibly into moralizing on the various beauties of nature, and comparing the natural connection there is between the exterior arrangements of bodies, which are formed to delight our senses, and the proportions of internal beauty; the propriety of action, and the native amiableness of an honest, generous, and upright mind. That as nature had carefully formed the various senses with different powers, adapted to convey delight to the soul, from the multitude of outward beings which surround us; so she had been no less careful in forming the mind with states and passions for directing its pursuit to objects capable of raising it to the sublimest pleasures; while those pleasures not only result from its purity, but are the very means of exalting it to still higher degrees of perfection and happiness. What a delightful sensation does this azure dome give the eye! said Lucius, with an air extremely graceful; could the earth be covered with a more beautiful ceiling! a finer canopy! what a pleasing verdure clothes the ground, while it meets the limits of the high arch of heaven with intermingling shades! a beautiful carpet
for

for man and beast ! But all lovely as this scene appears, how much does it fall short of the nobler landscape of the mind ! The honest man, whenever he pleases to review his actions, and contemplate the situation of his heart, perceives a pleasing extasy arising from every instance of his integrity. He sees a symmetry even more transportingly beautiful than this of nature. A proportion and arrangement of passions incomparably more pleasing than all the various dispositions of light and shade, of woods and pasture. How vast the difference between the most lovely scenes, which can arise from the modifications of matter in its most complete perfection ; between the tones of the most melting and harmonious accents, and the more delicate sensations of an approving conscience ! An engaging instance of the divine wisdom and benevolence, to constitute the very means of advancing the happiness of others, the means of procuring the sublimest pleasures to ourselves ! Very true, rejoined the clergyman with a smile ; but if we compare the divine congratulations of reason, the tranquil sweetness, and internal satisfaction of the benevolent man, the patriot, the friend of mankind, with the sordid pleasure of the successfully ambitious, the tricking knave, the abandoned debauchée, how vast, how immense a disproportion shall we find in the nature of their enjoyments ! enjoyments as widely distant as the high-wrought pleasures of a God, and the low gratifications of the most groveling animal. Well, but gentlemen, replied my aunt, laughing and pulling the clergyman by the sleeve, methinks you might be so polite, notwithstanding the rapture which seems to carry you out of yourselves, to allow us a small share in the conversation. I am of the same opinion with you, that as reason alone raises the man above the brute, so the pleasures arising in the mind from a reasonable conduct, must be infinitely superior to those of a mere sensualist. But how shall we be able to persuade these degenerate mortals to believe so ? Tho' they have no notion of the pure enjoyments of the soul ; tho' they are as lost to reason, as the herd that ranges in the field, or wallows in the sty ; and in short, tho' some of them have hardly any thing of the man, but the outward shape ; yet they

still assert the dignity of their nature, and would think it an affront to be put upon a level with their brethren of the grinning tribe, tho' their views, their desires, their gratifications appear to be the same. Your observation is very just, Madam, returned the clergyman, for it is not the external form, which constitutes the man; brutes differ in shape, and were there any particular species of them sound out with features, proportions and complexions exactly resembling ours, we should without hesitation, consider them only as mere animals while they wanted those noble qualifications of the mind, reason and judgment. Man (the lowest order of rational beings) is only raised above them by his intellectual faculties; by a light capable of directing his pursuit, and raising him to the sublimest elevation of passion and sentiment.

Lucius, perhaps influenced by an impulse of benevolence, which would not suffer him to hear this strong representation of the vices of mankind, without feeling some uneasiness, preserved all this while a profound silence; but finding they had done, he was going to make a reply when I prevented him, by saying, You were pleased, Sir, some time ago to vindicate mankind, from the charge of a natural depravity and propension to vice; and I must confess, that I was charmed with your reasoning, though what I have now heard, makes me a little suspect it. You know, you endeavoured to prove from experience, that so far from having any natural impulse to lead us on to vice, we had a moral sense implanted in the mind, directly calculated to spur us on to the most amiable heights of virtue; but how is this consistent with the picture that has been just given, in which, perhaps, the far greatest part of mankind is included? I freely confess that your sentiments of the moral sense made such an impression upon my mind, that I have considered it as a very favourite opinion, and therefore have waited all this while in expectation of its being brought into the subject, with which it seems to have some connection: but instead of that, reason alone has been mentioned, though I imagined, that those inward impulses to virtuous actions suspended the use of it. But both I find are insufficient for the happiness of mankind, since there is undoubtedly more vice than virtue in the world. It

must

must be acknowledged, Miss, said Lucius, that there is too much reason for the disagreeable representation that has been made. The most sacred engagements are daily violated; friendship and love, the most endearing bonds of society, are made a cloak to perpetrate the most execrable villanies, the ruin of innocence, the destruction of the unsuspecting and honest man. The traitor to his country assumes the honourable name of the patriot, and pretends to be struggling for liberty, while he is only paving the way to greatness, in order to riot in the spoils of his injured fellow-subjects. In short, whole orders and degrees of men seem infected with the dreadful contagion of vice and immorality, a more than brutal dissoluteness of manners. A dreadful spectacle indeed! a shocking depravity that must fill every generous mind with an affectionate pity and concern! But let us leave this gloomy, this disagreeable subject, and with hearts warmed with a love of truth and virtue, impartially enquire if vice is really so prevalent, as upon a superficial view it appears to be; by which means, I hope you will be convinced, that virtue reigns more universally than vice, and that by the constitution of nature, mankind have, even in this imperfect state, more real, more exquisite happiness than misery. An estimate of the utmost consequence both to the honour of human nature, and to demonstrate the wisdom and benevolence of that moral being, who is the father of the human soul, and the invariable, inexhaustible source of the most perfect and complete goodness.

In order then to form a right judgment of mankind, not the band of ruffians, not the public or private stews, not the gloomy dungeon filled with guilty wretchedness; but mankind in general must be the subject of our examination. We must extend our views, and glance upon the virtues and vices of all the known world; and here we shall find the greatest reason for an universal benevolence; we shall see with pleasure a noble simplicity of manners, and an integrity of heart, delightfully conspicuous amidst the barbarism of ignorance, the superstition of wild uncultivated nations. We shall see the same love of their country, the same tender sensibi-

bilities of friendship, the same natural affection, the same reciprocal endearing offices of social life, with the far distant unpolished savage, as with the polite and learned European. Nature even here works strongly; virtue and vice have names in all languages, and so deeply is the image of the deity impressed upon universal nature, that every rational being has, in general, the same sense of an obligation, the same delightful sensations arising from the consideration of the native and intrinsic excellence of actions beneficent, disinterested and generous.

Let us next consider if the usual manner of forming a judgment of private actions be consistent with truth and equity. While the mind, like the eye, can only glance on the surface of things, we can have but a very narrow view of the springs and motives which actuate even our dearest friends, and most intimate acquaintance. How incapable then are we to form a just opinion of the actions of those whose passions, whose inclinations and peculiar turn of mind, we are entirely unacquainted with? We are free in our censures; we precipitately blame the conduct of others; yet, however certain we may think the judgment is, which we pass upon their conduct, a little time often convinces us, that our conclusion was formed merely upon fallacious appearances; and that we judged of the motive, not from the action it was really formed to produce, but from the false and deceitful light it appeared in to us. A consideration that should kill at once all disposition to calumny, the blackest of all vices. Thus it frequently happens, that those actions which, at first view seem vicious, upon a more strict examination, appear to be strictly virtuous; and from this experience of the erroneousness of our judgments, and that the truth of the case, when discovered, generally leans to the side of virtue, it will not surely be thought unreasonable to conclude that it is generally so in other instances; and that if the real spring and motive to action was considered, virtue would greatly preponderate, and her votaries be vastly more numerous than the votaries of vice.

Be sincere now, my dear Charlotte, and confess that I have wearied you with the repetition of this grave conversation

variation. A variety of other remarks were made upon the same subjects, which entertained us till we arrived at the house; but in pity to you and myself, I shall make haste to conclude, and only say, that we were entertained with much politeness by my Lord; when having drank tea, we drove home, highly delighted with our agreeable excursion; but there is one particular that I ought not to forget to mention, and that is, that before I took leave of Lucius I found an opportunity to give him my letter. He received it with an air of astonishment and confusion, imagining, I believe, that it was his own I returned; but a sudden glance of his eye in a moment discovered his mistake, when his countenance changed from a troubled paleness to a glowing red. He had not then an opportunity of speaking to me; but giving me a look sparkling with joy and surprise, he retired in such a manner as discovered his impatience to know the contents.

I am now heartily weary; and begging you won'd pardon the impertinence of your friend, subscribe myself,

Your most affectionate Friend,

FELICIA.

L E T T E R IX.

My dear FRIEND,

COULD I possibly imagine, that with a temper so easy, gay and sprightly, I should be able to make such a change in your disposition, as I find my illness has occasioned. How endearing is that tender concern, that pleasing warmth of affection with which you interest yourself in my disorder, and endeavour to support my spirits by the reviving consolations of friendship.

It is now two months since I was seized with a fever; and I have yet hardly strength to write to you; but I can't forbear making an attempt to remove your fears;
by

by telling you as soon as possible, that I am at last out of danger. I have lately had a near prospect of death; but while I stood upon the verge of that awful state, that undiscovered country, "from which no traveller returns," I felt my mind calm and serene, as if charmed with the inspiring harmony of some angelic choir: all before me was raptures unutterable, delights boundless and eternal! But my intervals of sense were short, and disturbed with pain; I was almost continually delirious; and in these distractions of mind incessantly repeated the beloved name of my dear Lucius. I gave him the tenderest epithets; and wrapt in a fond delusion of thought, fancied he walked with me through the most delicious scenes imagination could paint, uttering the softest the most melting words; to which I replied in terms full of the same passionate tenderness. The whole family were witnesses of these wild ravings of fancy, which can't fail of raising some suspicions of what I have endeavoured to conceal with the utmost care; though none but Amelia has taken notice of it to me. But how Lucius behaved I am yet altogether unacquainted; nor durst I enquire.

I find, my dear Charlotte, that I must break off; a painful languor depresses my soul; my spirits sink, and I am too much fatigued to proceed. If what I write is either unintelligible, or more than commonly incoherent, a trembling hand, and giddy head are my excuse; but however indisposed I am, nothing shall excuse me from being,

Sincerely Your's,

FELICIA.

L E T T E R X.

M A D A M,

I AM now able to write you a longer letter than my last; a circumstance that gives me the highest pleasure, so glad am I at being able to resume my literary conversation with you.

As

As soon as I was able to leave my room and receive company, I had a visit from the maiden lady, Mr. Stevens's sister, whom I shall disguise under the name of Prudilla; and indeed I had no reason to be offended at seeing her, since I might well bear with her impertinence for the sake of the person she brought with her. Lucius, impatient for an opportunity of seeing me, which he durst not even attempt alone, for fear of giving my aunt some suspicion of the interest he had in my recovery, had offered his service to wait upon her, which she accepting, gave us both the means of indulging, by our mutual glances, the tender sentiments which swelled our bosoms. The moment he entered the room, I could read in his looks that he had a thousand things to say to me, only proper to be uttered in private. His countenance discovered a joy which glowed in every feature; but when he congratulated me upon my returning health, a fear of saying too much made him say too little; but however few his words, the moving tone in which he uttered them, sufficiently expressed how much they came from his heart. Need I tell you, Madam, said he, (turning his back to my aunt, doubtless to prevent her reading his looks) that I sympathise with the rest of your friends in their joy for your recovery? While a starting tear, and a glance the most charmingly tender, made me at once interpret his meaning, and fancy that he would have said, O, my dear! with what transport do I see you again! how vastly does my ecstacy at your recovery exceed the cold joy of these other friends!

Our first compliments being over, Prudilla introduced a piece of private history, which gave her a charming opportunity of indulging for a few minutes her prevailing inclination for detraction. Have you heard the news, ladies? said she, assuming an air of starch'd modesty, really it is so extraordinary, that it makes one ashamed of one's sex. To what a height of wickedness is the world grown! positively one is surprized to think of the impudence of some people. Would you think it? Miss Lucy was, (I blush for the creature)—Pray, Madam, said my aunt, explain yourself; what of Miss Lucy? Really, rejoined Prudilla, the affair is so indecent,

cent, that it is a shock to modesty to mention it. Well, Madam, said I, rather than offend your delicacy, we will let Miss Lucy alone, and change the subject. That is kind, my dear, said she smiling; she was brought to bed last night; I am sure I am all of a flame now; added she, and the creature——O Madam, cried Lucius, with a design to make her change the subject, that modest blush becomes you incomparably. Here all the company smiled; for Prudilla's cheeks discovered not the least tincture of her pretended confusion; however, his artifice had no effect. Really, resumed she, as I was saying, the thing has the impudence to excuse herself by pretending——At this moment my physician entered the room, and gave her the mortification of being again interrupted by his asking me several questions; but at last taking a chair, she resumed a third time: As I was saying, Madam,——Pray, ladies, cried the physician, interrupting her again, may I know the subject of your conversation. Yes, Sir, replied Amelia, our friend here was mentioning a circumstance relating to an unhappy lady that has been deluded, and was brought to bed last night. Very good, replied he. Not so good neither, cried the prude in a peevish tone, the impudent slut would excuse herself by saying——O she would persuade us to believe, I suppose, cried the doctor with a sneer, that the young gentleman, after promising her marriage, and swearing a thousand oaths to convince her of his fidelity, finding at last all his arguments prove unsuccessful, in a fit of despair, drew his sword, when pointing it to his bosom, he pretended that since she was so cruel as to distrust his sincerity, he would give her the last proof of the violence of his passion. Here terrified at this dreadful sight, and melting with pity, she flies upon him, stops his hand, tells him that she is convinced of his sincerity, and will give him every proof of it he can reasonably desire. He now eagerly seizes the tender moment, presses her close, till she at last consents to purchase his life with the loss of what ought to be infinitely dearer to her than her own, while he in the mean time laughs to find her become the dupe of his artifice; ridicules her foolish fondness that could make her think him in earnest; and, in short, glories

glories in the *noble* victory he has gained over her honour. This, to be sure, was the case, continued he ; at least, we should be charitable enough to think so, in vindication of the poor lady.

We all smiled at this piece of raillery, while Prudilla discovered, by her unsettled looks, that she was at a loss to know whether she ought to disapprove or commend this instance of the physician's vivacity ; since she could not guess whether it was intended to ridicule all the excuses that could be made in her favour, or to apologize for her conduct. But the moment he had done speaking, Lucius rejoined with a modest, unaffected air, We ought not to wonder if an artful villain can sometimes triumph over a mind, who knowing itself incapable of deceit, can hardly be brought to suspect another, especially the man she loves, of a guilt the most black and shocking to nature ; but that an honest man should be so lost in passion, and hurried away by the fever of impetuous desire, is indeed a case very extraordinary, and not easily accounted for. Can a virtuous man be so void of reason, so lost to prudence and the tender delicacies of an innocent passion, as to hazard for a moment the honour and reputation of her he loves ? Will he not even distrust himself ? Nay, supposing him ever so certain of the integrity of his own heart, are there not a variety of circumstances which may render it impossible for him to fulfil his engagements ? And must not the bare possibility of this damp even the very first idea of a too precipitate pleasure which may be so dearly bought ? The least apprehension of ruining the object of his tenderest affections, must surely give him the most painful alarms, and fill his mind with the most dreadful fears, the most terrible conflicts. And is it not equally surprising, returned my aunt, that a modest lady can hear a proposal of this kind, without being shocked ! without looking into the gulf of misery and ruin which lies before her ! without trembling at the dangers which surround her ! without imploring the divine assistance, and resolving to lose her life, rather than taint her virtue, or surrender her honour upon the fairest promises ! but alas ! we frequently see people act without thought, and un-
dated

dated by the misery of those who have fallen into the same snare, precipitately rush upon their own destruction. A promise of marriage is the usual bait; but this unhappy lady's story ought to convince every one, that even in the nearest prospect of that union, it is the highest degree of folly and madness, to drop the guard of innocence, and allow her intended husband liberties inconsistent with decency, and the reserve of a modest prudence.

It is a great misfortune, rejoined Lucius with an air of candour, that in this case, a false step, which may possibly proceed from nothing more than imprudence, or a too easy confidence, should be attended with such dreadful consequences with respect to the ladies; and one action throw an indelible stain on the fairest character, while another person of an infinitely worse disposition, may indulge the rancour of her heart in sporting with the honour and reputation of thousands. Miss Lucy is a lady possessed of so many virtues, that if the case required it, every one, I think, would be glad of seeing reason to believe her less criminal than she may appear at first view; but if I am not misinformed, there is no need of wishing for reasons to excuse her conduct. A variety of extraordinary circumstances are in her favour; her modesty and virtue have stood the severest shock; and if it be thought that she has here lost all pretensions to them, it ought to be considered too, that the day she forfeited them, appeared to her, and all her friends, the last of her freedom. The next day was to have given him that right to her person which love, a reciprocal love, had constituted long before. She was his by obligations the most sacred and binding——obligations that can only be confirmed, but never increased, either by the assistance of the magistrate or priest. They thought themselves secure in each other's fidelity; they fancied nothing could prevent the happy ceremony from being solemnized; but, alas! life itself is precarious; that very night he was seized with a malignant fever, which, though it carried him off in a few days, in all his intervals of sense he acknowledged his engagements, and even in his last moments he called her his wife, and confirmed the

right

right he had given her in his will to possess his estate, by frequently expressing his desire of having it faithfully executed. How! cried Prudilla, in a lofty tone of authority, do you pretend to vindicate the creature? If she has lost her reputation, it is no more than she deserves. I would have no mercy on such impudent, confident things. Can any punishment be great enough for the sluts who are such a disgrace to the modesty of our sex? They should be all burnt alive, or hanged at least.——Hold, Madam, replied my aunt, hastily interrupting her, indeed you are too severe. It must be confessed, indeed, that both she and her lover were much to blame; they were certainly guilty of the highest degree of imprudence and folly; but you ought to consider too, that virtue does not consist in the loss of humanity and good manners. I was present when the young gentleman expired, and was witness of a scene that I shall never forget as long as I live. The very remembrance brings the tears to my eyes. A few minutes before he breathed his last, his senses, which had been long disturbed, returned, when calling for his dear wife, Lucy, who sat near the bed drowned in grief, and fatigued with her constant watching, started from her silent sadness, while her impatience to know what he had to say, suspended for a moment the falling tear. He pressed her in his weak and trembling arms, and endeavoured, in the most endearing manner, to enable her to support his loss; said the kindest, the most affecting things; till at last, his countenance brightening into a placid serenity, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and still pressing her hand, seemed to make her the subject of some ardent petition; but he had no sooner finished his silent ejaculations, than fixing a most tender look upon her, he cried, Adieu, my Lucy, my wife; when shutting his eyes, he sunk upon the pillow and expired.——But what words can express the unhappy Lucy's despair? She fainted away upon his lifeless body; her cheek lay upon his, and equalled the mortal paleness of that it pressed. I assisted in carrying her out of the room, and recovering her senses; but they no sooner returned, than (sad effect of the most violent grief!) her tears, her incessant tears were stopped, and she gave way

way to a silent, sober melancholy, infinitely more terrible than the strongest impulses of raging despair. Alas! cried Lucius, in a tone that plainly expressed the compassionate disposition of his heart, how much is this poor lady to be pitied! but would not her distress, her shame, her infamy have been greater, if her grief had sprung from his infidelity rather than his death? She now justly laments a man every way worthy of her esteem and affection; his memory is still dear to her; his virtues are a pleasing subject of melancholy delight and soothing pain. But with what agonies of rage, vexation and madness, would she have sustained the shock of finding the man false on whose fidelity she had reposed her honour! with what mortifying inquietudes would she find herself contemned by him she loved! yet the guilt would, in fact, be his alone; the folly and imprudence her's. Conscious of the purity of an innocent heart, her severest reproaches must fall upon the guilty villain, the barbarous betrayer of her peace and happiness, and not immediately on herself.

Here Lucius concluded, and some ladies coming in at the same time, the conversation took a different turn. I leave you now, my dear Charlotte, to make what reflections you please upon what I have here related; the company soon broke up, but I could not see Lucius retire with the rest, without feeling an uneasiness that let me know the excess of my passion. However, he had the address, in parting, to slip the following letter into my hand unperceived; he delivered it with an air of tenderness, saying, with a low voice, Since I am not permitted, Madam, either to send or speak to you alone, forgive the absurdity of my being my own messenger. I made no other answer than wishing him a good night, and, as soon as he was gone, seized the first opportunity of retiring to my chamber, when, securing the door to prevent my being surprized, I broke open the seal, and read the following lines:

“ Dear Madam,

“ **I**F you knew with what an excess of grief I have lamented your illness, while I considered you on the borders of the grave, you might perhaps form
“ some

Some idea of that sweet, that transporting joy with
 which I find you returning to life, and all the satisfactions
 of health and ease. I can't help regarding
 your physician as my dearest friend; I could hug him
 to my bosom for contributing to your recovery, at the
 same time that I bless the unseen hand of providence,
 and pour out my grateful heart to that most gracious
 Being who has heard my prayers, who has beheld
 with compassion my incessant tears. Amelia's friend-
 ship for my sister, and the concern they have both
 in all that relates to you, have procured me an op-
 portunity of learning every day the state of your dis-
 order, without my running the hazard of discovering
 my passion to your aunt, by a solicitude that would
 doubtless render me suspected. Yet what a multi-
 tude of hopes and fears has this correspondence given
 me! in a swift succession they have raised my soul
 to sudden rapture, and then sunk me down into the
 most dreadful despair! Sad vicissitude! All my hap-
 piness seemed to depend upon your life; and while
 that was at stake, a prospect of inevitable misery lay
 before me. All joy seemed departing. A solitary
 sadness, a dreary gloom hung upon my spirits, and
 hovered round the various beauties of nature; they
 had no charms for me. Not wealth nor titles, with
 all their splendor, could have calmed the anguish oc-
 casioned by your loss. While I thought that the
 most lovely form and the fairest mind were near be-
 ing separated, my heart-strings were ready to burst,
 as if the very seat of life and vital heat was going to
 be torn from my bosom. Religion only had power to
 moderate my grief, and, by its reviving consolations,
 disperse the darkening clouds which hung about my
 soul.—— But how shall I be able to describe the
 sudden ecstacy, the transporting rapture which filled
 my breast, when I heard that you were out of dan-
 ger? I sickened with a sweet excess of delight.——
 But, alas! to what purpose are these involuntary
 transports? Why do I place all my happiness in see-
 ing and hearing you, since no secret ties will ever
 bind us together, and secure the continuance of these
 innocent enjoyments? Accept, however, of my warm-
 est

68 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

"est congratulations, and while my happiness depends
 "entirely upon your's, believe me to be the sincerest
 "and most affectionate of your servants,

LUCIUS."

I confess, my dear friend, that I could not read this letter without tears, and indulging some reflections on the unhappiness of my situation; but as it is time to conclude my long epistle, I shall pass over these unquiet thoughts, and subscribe myself,

Your most hearty friend,

FELICIA.

L E T T E R X I.

FROM Amaranthine bowers and embrowning shades, from flowery lawns and all the silent solemn scenes of peaceful innocence and harmless love, thy friend Felicia greets her other self, her dear, her much loved Charlotte.

Don't you think now, my dear, by this beginning, that I am tolerably well read in romance, and have drank deep of the spirit of those extraordinary performances. At least, I think, I ought to have some knowledge of them, since I seem to be writing one myself. My plot now begins to thicken; and I shall certainly, if ever these letters come to light, be considered, in some future time, as a little heroine, while Lucius will have an undisputed claim to the honour of being the hero of my story. He has now a very formidable obstacle to encounter with, before he can even hope to arrive at the height of his happiness: but you need not be frightened, here are no fiery dragons to conquer, or enchanted castles to storm; my pastoral adventures will furnish no such prodigies. I will therefore leave these marvellous events to the doughty wonder-working champions of ancient date, and content myself with sticking close to truth and nature; and don't doubt but that in the rustic simplicity in which I spend my time, I shall furnish a history at least as entertaining as their's. And indeed,

indeed, whatever name is given to my story, whether of rural adventures, novel or romance, I should be very well satisfied, though all the world thought it fictitious, might I at last (which I hardly dare hope for) have it concluded, like the most celebrated pieces of imaginary scenes of love and gallantry, in a happy catastrophe.

As I am very fond of my cousin Polly, who is one of the prettiest little creatures you ever saw, I frequently amuse myself, and divert her, with gathering flowers; making garlands, and sometimes placing them in her hair, or adorning her head with a wreath, as agreeable for its odours, as for the intermingled lustre of its glowing colours. You can't imagine, Madam, how charmingly the dear child looks when thus adorned; you would be apt to take her for some little sylvan deity, or one of the inhabitants of the skies. The weather being extremely fine, we went yesterday morning into the garden, to divert ourselves in this innocent manner, when having spent some time in our childish pastime, a desire to indulge at large my own reflections, made me leave my young companion, and retire into a neighbouring field; there I seated myself on a rising bank, beneath which ran a stream, that flowing swiftly with a gentle murmur, drew my attention, and fixed my eyes upon the various coloured pebbles which shone through the liquid chrysal. But tho' these trifles engaged my looks, my heart was fixed upon an object infinitely more important; I was thinking of my dear Lucius, and enumerating in idea not only his several perfections, but recollecting all the fine things I had heard him say; and could I be entertained in a manner more delightful? But I had not long indulged these pleasing contemplations, when I was interrupted by my little prattler, who, seeing me at a distance, came running with her hands full of flowers. I was then so buried in thought, that I did not see her till she was almost come up to me, when calling me to look at her treasure, and to observe some carnations she herself had been placing in her hair, I was so vexed at being disturbed in my pleasing dreams, that I could not help answering her a little peevishly, and desiring her to leave me. She was justly surprized to see my humour so soon changed,
and,

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and, with a voice that spoke her out of breath with running, said, She wondered how she had made me angry; but that she would not leave me till I had forgiven her. The tears now trickling down her rosy cheeks, made me in a moment ashamed of my sudden ill-nature. I took her in my arms, and fondly kissing her, told her I only desired to be a few minutes alone, and begged she would tell me what she wanted. You told me, said she, resuming her usual sweetness, that these flowers made me look very pretty; won't they, Madam, make you look pretty too? I wanted to make you as fine as you made me. Won't you let me dries your head? I could not help smiling at this question; but, upon her persisting in her request, I at last consented, and, fancying nobody could possibly see me, resolved to do as she desired, and afterwards lead her through the garden, to divert my aunt and Amelia with her childish frolic. I therefore took a ribbon out of my pocket, and enameling it with the brightest colours I could select from those she brought me, bound it round my head; when an impulse of curiosity made me hastily go nearer the brook to place it to advantage, and see how well it became me. Here I stayed some time with my eyes fixed on the watery mirror, holding the beauteous child by her hand, and observing the different effects these fantastic ornaments had in the countenances of our shadowy images. I was now in a most gay and lively humour, and lifting up my eyes with a chearful smile, was going to propose our return home, when I was struck with the sight of a well-dressed gentleman, who stood gazing upon us from the opposite bank, and who had doubtless been a witness of all my fooleries. Innocent as my amusement had been, I could not at first recover from the confusion and disorder this spectator gave me. However, I turned hastily, and taking hold of Miss Polly's hand, began to move towards the garden, at the same time pulling off my various coloured tiara, threw it to the ground; when the stranger, having stood still for a moment, suddenly leaped from the opposite bank, hastened after me, and seizing the hand that was at liberty, after a deluge of compliments, which discovered at least his good breeding,

ing, conducted me home. My aunt immediately, by her behaviour, let me see that she was far from being displeased with my companion; she treated him with the utmost respect, yet endeavoured frequently to dive into his thoughts, by examining his countenance with a scrupulous and steady inspection. She seemed to penetrate his very soul; not the least gesture could escape her notice; yet she was so cautious in these piercing regards, that it was impossible for him to observe them; and indeed her looks all the while expressed a satisfaction that let me see that whatever discoveries she had made, they were far from being disagreeable to her; for whenever my eyes met her's, I could easily discern an affectionate kind of joy, which seemed to arise from the tender glow of a warm heart.

The gentleman behaved all this while with the most perfect ease and freedom, and without appearing under the least constraint by the old lady's presence, entertained me with the confident freedom of an old lover, who thinks he has a right to our tenderness and respect. Nay, he told my aunt, even in my presence, the situation in which he found me, the manner in which he said I attracted his eyes and heart; informed her of the minutest circumstances relating to my behaviour; described the flowers which adorned my head; drew a comparison between them, and (to use his own words) the more lovely and attractive beauties of my cheeks. Nor was my shape, my air, forgotten; he took me for some deity; I could certainly be no less than one of the immortals. Here he discovered all the heathen mythology he had learnt at school; protested that he mistook me for Flora; and lest I should be too simple to understand the honour that was done by this comparison, told me, that she was one of the most charming of all the goddesses, and could be equalled in beauty by none upon earth but me. In short, he even offered to go himself and fetch the flowery wreath that so much became me; assured us, that the first moment he saw me was the last of his liberty; and asserted, that if I would consent to be his, he should, ever after our marriage, oblige me to perpetuate the remembrance of that

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that happy day, by wearing upon it a like blooming crown.

Thus he run on for a quarter of an hour together, without giving either my aunt or me an opportunity of speaking a single syllable; he was all life and gaiety, and attempted to divert me at the same time that he strove to find a way to my heart. He thought it impossible that I should be insensible to the force of flattery, and therefore attacked my vanity with incessant praises. One moment he seemed melting in tenderness, but then immediately recovering himself, as dreading my taking an advantage of his weakness to use him ill, laughed at his own passion, and seeming to triumph over it, turned it into ridicule, with a vivacity accompanied with abundance of wit and humour. In short, he is the most sprightly, unaffected creature you ever beheld; for even affectation in him must lose its name; every thing is natural, genteel and easy.

But I had not been long in his company, when my aunt, fancying that she might possibly be a restraint to us both, took an opportunity to leave the room. However, his behaviour was still the same; he smiled and looked grave, he sighed, he laughed, he sung a languishing strain, the next moment hummed a rigadon, and capered about the room; but yet it was not difficult to discover, that tho' his temper naturally inclined him to be gay, it would have been now much more easy to him, and doubtless more pleasing too, to have assumed a behaviour more agreeable to the situation of his heart. In spite of all his efforts, love still had the mastery, and methought his sighs appeared much more genuine, than those starts of airy sprightliness under which he endeavoured to conceal them. He would have me consider him as a lover, though he was unwilling to appear with the languishing tenderness of one that felt the full power of that passion. Yet, in his very attempts to shew his liberty, he rattled his chains. I am sure you would have laughed as heartily at his behaviour as I did; for indeed he is one of the most odd, fantastic agreeable fellows, that ever assumed the tender name of a lover. But as I have given you Lucius's picture,

picture, you may expect that I should give you his too ; take it then as follows :

He is pretty tall, and of the just mean between the too fat or too lean ; his shape is genteel and easy ; his air that of a fine gentleman who has seen the world ; his complexion fair, his forehead large, his eyes brisk and full of fire ; his nose of a moderate size , his mouth rather too wide, but rendered agreeable by a constant smile which sits on his lips and dimples in his cheeks ; and as to his chin, I assure you, it is not less regular than any other feature in his face. But I must not forget to mention his drests, which, in this rustic part of the country appears very singular ; every thing about him is of the newest fashion ; nor does he want any ornament to set off his person to advantage. This is an exact portrait of the gay, the janty, the confident Melifont ; and by the description I have already given you of him, you will readily imagine that poor Lucius has a very formidable rival.

After having diverted me for near two hours, with a thousand agreeable extravagancies, he bid me adieu ; but before he left the house, had a private conversation of some minutes with my aunt, who, as soon as he was gone, came to me ; when seating herself in a chair close to mine, she told me with a smile, that the gentleman had been begging her leave to continue his visits ; that she knew him to be of a good family, and possessed of an estate of three thousand a year ; and added, that if he was agreeable to me, and was really as much in love as he pretended, she thought I could not make a better choice. I replied, with a great deal of truth, that however diverting his company had been, he had not yet made any impression upon my heart, and that, agreeable as his levity might render him to other women, I could not help thinking that a lasting happiness must be built upon a more solid foundation than the airy flights of such a giddy volatile temper. I must confess, Madam, said I, that his person and behaviour would render his addresses acceptable to the far greater part of our sex, who are perhaps too easily pleased with gay appearances. His confidence might, in their opinion, appear heroic, and carry along with it

irresistible charms ; but I shall never think a man has any great degree of tenderness for me, while I have not the power to soften him too much for him to discover all his sprightliness in my presence. My aunt smiled at this reply, and only answered, that she would not advise me to any thing contrary to my inclinations ; and Amelia and Polly coming in at the same time, we dropt the subject.

I have nothing further to add, than that I am,

My Dear CHARLOTTE,

Your most obedient servant,

FELICIA.

L E T T E R XII.

I SHALL not pretend, my dear Charlotte, to decide whether the extraordinary assurance of Mellifont, or the diffidence of Lucius, is the most excusable quality ; they are both certainly very great foibles when carried to excess. But as confidence and folly are nearly allied, so modesty is a weakness if it suppresses a man's virtue, and hides it from the world ; if it fetters his mind and restrains his actions when he desires to exert himself. But if Lucius appears, even upon a superficial view, superior to Mellifont, notwithstanding the thick shade which, instead of shewing his merit to advantage, obscures some of its brightest excellencies, how much more amiable must he appear than that gentleman, if it be considered that his good qualities are set in the most glaring and striking light, and that his very follies are some of his greatest perfections.

I told you in my last, that Amelia's entering the room put an end to the conversation I had with my aunt upon the merit and fortune of Mellifont ; but I forgot to add, that upon our telling my cousin of the visit I had received from my gay spark, I perceived that she changed colour, and immediately her countenance, which at first had all the marks of ease and good humour, discovered the evident symptoms of a thoughtful

ful disturbance; nor should I perhaps have called this circumstance to mind, which I then took but little notice of, had not her behaviour since that time awakened my attention, and quickened my apprehension.

Though her temper is naturally rather grave than sprightly, yet I had always remarked in her a most agreeable evenness of disposition, a flow of serene and tranquil spirits, which gave an engaging cheerfulness to her behaviour, and rendered her equally acceptable to others, and happy in herself; this was an observation that her whole deportment had confirmed ever since I knew her; but now that placid serenity which sweetened our conversation, and greatly enhanced the pleasures of our mutual friendship, seemed interrupted; she sought for opportunities of being alone, and discovered a reserve which I really thought her incapable of. I have had a visit in form from Mellifont almost every day since the date of my last. He comes in his coach, with a pompous equipage, and dressed with as much splendor, as if he had prepared to appear in the drawing-room on a birth-night, while every visit seems to encrease poor Amelia's discontent and coldness to me.

Two days ago, as I was taking a turn in the garden, I found her seated in a pensive posture in a painted alcove, at the end of an alley the most obscure and retired. She seemed lost in thought, and leaning her head upon her hands, with both her elbows fixed upon the table, was doubtless indulging some serious reflections; but whatever was the subject of her contemplations, the rustling I made amongst the leaves of some bows, which, for want of cutting, crossed the path, and which rebounded back as I forced my way thro' them, soon made her lift up her eyes; when coming towards me, My dear, cried I, you will think me perhaps guilty of ill-manners for being so rude as to intrude upon your solitude; but no matter; my affection for you gives me some right to your confidence, and therefore, in the name of friendship, I desire you will either make me as grave as yourself, or permit me the pleasure of forcing you to partake of my gaiety. Come, let me know the cause of this change.——Some doleful ditty!——Some tender tale of love!——Come, come, out

with it. Here, taking hold of her hand, I began to lead her back to the alcove, when turning her head away, with an air of unaffected coldness, she gave a deep sigh, and then begged that I would be so kind as to let her go, since she was in an ill humour, and was very unwilling to infect me. Nay, Amelia, said I, I have no right to detain you against your inclinations: I thought I might be so happy as to divert you. I hope you will not think an unseasonable attempt of this kind unpardonable. No, my dear, said she, you are extremely obliging; but as I shall be but a disagreeable companion, I chuse to retire. At this she left me, when standing still for a moment, to think whither I should ramble, I saw her returning. She begged pardon for her ill-manners, and making some apologies, asked at last, How I liked Mellifont, and what I thought of his addresses? I laughed at her question, and readily replied, that I thought him a much more agreeable companion than a lover. Nay, my dear Felicia, said she, with jealousy in her eyes, don't dissemble; are you not charmed with his company? Not as a lover, I assure you, said I; he is indeed one of the most agreeable impertinents I ever beheld; but why this question? Have you any private interest in view, that you ask it? Come, be frank now, and if it will be any satisfaction to you, I here resign all pretensions to his heart. I should be very glad of being excused from the trouble of receiving his visits; though I can't deny but there is a pleasure attends the homages of a man of his humour and appearance; they sooth our vanity, give us an air of importance, and flatter our prevailing desire of making captives. But this is a very ill-natured pleasure, replied Amelia, with some warmth; and I thought you had too much good sense, as well as humanity, to indulge it at the expence of the ease and happiness of a worthy gentleman; besides, it is dangerous sporting with the tenderness of a man of such merit; for while you hover round the flame, you may possibly burn your wings. No, never fear it, returned I; I am in no danger, I assure you, but if he will pay his addresses to me, how can I prevent it? Am I answerable for his folly? I have used no arts to retain him;

him; and indeed have been so far from indulging my pride at the expence of his peace, that I have endeavoured, as much as possible, to make him loose all hope of obtaining my affection. Amelia's countenance now cleared up, a rising joy sparkled in her eyes, and gave an agreeable flush to her cheeks; and, in short, she had all that air of ease and satisfaction which our looks commonly express when we feel our hearts eased of a burthen which distorts its tender fibres, and gives us the most racking pain; but presently, assuming an air of softness, she confessed with a low voice, (as if dreading even in that retired place, a witness of her melting passion) that she loved the dear engaging Mellifont; but she had no sooner eased her bosom of this important secret, than a rustic blush, with all the marks of a confusion which springs from innocence and artless simplicity, overspread her face, and made her hang down her head; but at last recovering herself, she told me she had seen Mellifont a few days before he paid me my first visit; that she was charmed with his person, but did not perceive that he had made any extraordinary impression on her heart, till she found that he paid his addresses to me; when love, jealousy and despair contributed all their force to render her unhappy. She then asked me with a smile, that demanded my confidence, if I was less sensible of the merit of Lucius than she of Mellifont? and told me, that suspecting it while I was sick, from the tender things I said of him, she sent to let Marilla know, that if her brother had a real affection for me, it would be then imprudent to continue his visits; and that having learnt from her friend the violence of his passion, she had used all her art to prevent giving him the uneasiness he might feel at finding me in the company of his rival. Sensible of the advantages I received from her prudent precaution, and reflecting that my aunt would probably, without her assistance to keep it secret, have been by this time fully convinced of my tenderness for Lucius, I returned her my sincerest thanks. We then talked of his perfections, delightful subject! in which she seemed to strive to outdo me, in giving him the praises due to his merit; while the reserve, which for several days had subsisted between us, now

ending in a mutual open confidence, bound us closer to each other, by shewing her the folly of her groundless distrust, and strengthening and enlarging my esteem for her, who, in the midst of her jealous fears, took care of my happiness, and provided against the discovery of a secret, on the concealment of which all my future felicity depended. We embraced with the utmost affection; we made reciprocal promises of treating each other for the future, without disguise; the very appearance of which was now below the dignity of our friendship. Our hearts were to lie open, and not the least circumstance relating to the happiness of each other concealed. What a pleasing intercourse of tender passion!

We now walk an hour every day to talk on the same subject; and I don't believe we either of us find our delight grow less by the repetition. Love is an inexhaustible theme; it furnishes our conversation with the most delicate, refined and exquisite ideas; it raises us above ourselves, and not only inspires an elevation of sentiment, but gives us a very noble and sublime manner of expressing what it dictates; so that were you to hear us on this melting subject, you would smile at our diction, and the tender cadence of our periods; and be much more ready to take us for a couple of theatrical heroines, rehearsing the parts of two languishing princesses, than for rural nymphs, unaccustomed to high flights and lofty strains, whose only perfection consists in being pastoral lovers. Sometimes we walk for two minutes together in eloquent silence; then, after a sigh or two, still more eloquent, we burst into some moving complaint on the severity of fortune, in making her love a person in wealth, her superior, and me a youth unblest with the advantages I enjoy.

Thus I employ the time of Lucius's absence, in a way most agreeable to that esteem and affection I shall always have for him; while absence, instead of removing the tender softness of my heart, renders every thought of him still dearer to me, and presents him to my mind in every new charm which fancy or love can invent.

But

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But I would not have you imagine, Madam, that we spend all our time in these useless lamentations; we have read novels, romances and plays, and have therefore some notions of plots and stratagems; but I believe we were neither of us formed for intrigue, since with all our industry, we can't yet invent any method to procure me the company of my lover, that will not render us liable to suspicion from my aunt. Besides, Mellifont is a constant interruption to my happiness by his perpetual visits; for I can't resolve to see Lucius at a time when we should be so liable to be disturbed by that intruder's presence. His company on this account grows distasteful to me; and it is with the utmost difficulty that I keep within the bounds of good manners. But I am afraid of disobliging him, lest he should acquaint my father with his passion, which he would doubtless approve, and lest my refusing to gratify him in this particular, should offend him so much, as to make him cross me in the dearest interests of my heart. I am,

Yours; &c.

FELICIA.

L E T T E R XIII.

M A D A M,

NOT the cooling shade of some friendly bower, the fanning breeze of zephyrs, or the agreeable freshness of some limpid stream, could give greater delight to the laborious hind, scorched with the meridian sun's too ardent beams, than I received from the news of your being already joined, in the most sacred bonds, to the gay, the tender Philario. May all your days be propitious! May blooming joys, ever opening with new delight, perpetuate your felicity! May his lordship's affection, instead of decreasing with time, ripen into that soft esteem, that tender complacency which are the natural attendants of love and merit, and the highest summit of all sublunary happiness! In short, may you be bound to him with all that dignity of passion which is

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necessary to render him ever as dear to you as now; while love shall have the energy of religion, and inclination the force of every sacred dictate!

You will think this a very odd kind of a preamble to be addressed to a bride in all the blooming pride of youth and beauty; but if you consider that we ought to lay down some principles to secure the continuance of our true felicity, you will not think it an inexcusable piece of impertinence in me, to put you in mind, that if we should enjoy any solid happiness, we must be contented to dissent from the maxims of the greatest part of mankind; it is certain that we are governed more by sounds than we are generally willing to imagine. — But I might have considered too, that your good sense had undoubtedly directed you to make the same observation. But let that be as it will, I know I am secure of your pardon, for you are now in too happy a situation to be offended at any thing I can say, however common and trifling my thoughts.

To put an end to their grave remarks, I come to my own affairs: and, first, I shall tell you that I have lately had an interview with Lucius, in which I gave him an opportunity of indulging all the tenderness of his heart; a satisfaction that was procured me by the kind assistance of Amelia. Upon hearing, a few days since, of the necessities of an honest but indigent family, about a mile distant from my aunt's, I resolved to pay them a visit, to indulge some of that sublime pleasure which it is the greatest advantage of a large fortune to procure us. Amelia only was acquainted with this visit; nor did I tell her of it till I was ready to set out, when I desired her to accompany me, to which she instantly consented. We found the unhappy mansion at the foot of a hill, surrounded with several inclosures of orchards, pasture grounds and corn fields; at the entrance leading to the door, was a short walk between two elder hedges, which inclosed a small kitchen garden, with some stacks of hay, and, near the main building, some stables and barns. But every thing was in profound silence; for no human object was near, and nothing to be heard but the warbling songs of the airy choristers, who fluttered among the hedges, or sat making their responses from
the

the distant thorny brakes. The solitary stillness of the place, added to the reflection of the business in which I was employed, contributed to render me thoughtful, and I could not help giving some moments to the consideration of the various unavoidable miseries which attend human nature; miseries which neither virtue nor prudence can always guard against. With a mind thus dipped in pity, I could not help hesitating a little when we came to the door; but at last, rapping softly, we entered the room, where despair and sorrow were painted in the strongest colours, and in every face such an undissembled sadness, as struck me to the very soul; for notwithstanding the relief I intended to give them, I could not forbear sharing in the general grief; and, indeed, it was with some pain that I assumed an air of ease and cheerfulness, in order to comfort a pretty boy, who stood with his eyes fixed upon his mother, and pulling her by the apron, cried at seeing her weep. Two other children, too young to take the same notice, were playing about the room; but wherever I turned my eyes, every thing was in disorder; nor was it possible to cross the room, or take a chair, for the confused heap of litter which was every way strewed about. Alas! the poor woman was in too deep affliction to attend to the management of her family; her mind too much discomposed to attend to trifles! for a violent distress almost always renders us inactive; it sinks and depresses the spirits, and when no visible assistance is in view, makes the unhappy incapable of thinking or using their natural abilities, in order to extricate themselves from the pressure of their difficulties.

These observations, Madam, I have learnt from my aunt, and have always found them agreeable to truth. At one of the windows sat a young man with despair in his eyes, and a look that discovered he was grown stupid with grief; a book of devotion lay open before him, on which his regards were fixed; but fixed in such a steady manner, as shewed that he was incapable of reading: he pored on the same place, and neither his eyes nor his head moved to take in the compass of a line. As soon as we entered the room, the good woman arose from her chair, and appearing surprised at the sight of

strangers of our appearance, asked our business, when taking the little boy into my arms, I wiped away his tears, and kissing his pretty rosy cheeks, told him, I would wipe away his mother's too if I was able; at this he smiled; when emptying some lumber out of a chair, while the mother made one ready for Amelia, we both sat down. At a loss how to introduce the cause of our visit, and willing to oblige them in a way as little painful as possible, I seemed mighty fond of the little creatures that were playing around me; then turning to the mother, desired that she would look upon us as her sincerest friends, and that we should think it a pleasure to serve her; but she thanked me in a manner that shewed that her hopes were at a low ebb, and too far sunk to be raised by glimmering prospects and airy visions. However, she called her husband; but before he came Amelia arose, and leaving me to comfort the distressed as my humanity directed, elated with the agreeable surprize she hoped to give me, went out with the rustic youth, and privately dispatched him to Marilla, to let her know where we were, and that her company, with her brother's, would be acceptable to us both. Mean while the master of the house, with more firmness in his countenance, but with eyes drooping with care, came to us from a back room, and related the cause of his misfortunes with that honest frankness and simplicity, which always affects the mind, tho' uttered in the most plain and homely language. He told me, That by the excessive rains, which had enriched the farmers in the neighbouring hills with several successive years of plenty, he was reduced from a state of affluence to penury and indigence; that he should be obliged to sell the plentiful crop that covered his lands to a vast disadvantage, to satisfy his landlord's demands; and that he had now no other prospect than to lose the fruit of his labours, to be turned out of all his possessions, and perhaps to glean the fields he himself had sown; and all this for want of a small sum, which his landlord had now a particular occasion for.

—— Willing to shorten his uneasiness, I here interrupted him, to know what sum would remove his present anxiety? and, as soon as he had informed me, I told

told him with a smile, that I thought myself very happy at having it in my power to give joy to an honest family, and at the same time emptied my purse upon the table. I now felt my heart overflow with a sympathetic extasy, arising from the transports I myself had occasioned. Thus, with a little gold that has long lain useless in my chest, and for which I have here no use, I have procured the happiness of a whole family, and given myself a delight more exquisite than I ever experienced from the like occasion; since the advantage they have received from it (as they told me) may probably redound to their children's children. What use could I possibly make of this hoarded pelf to procure me equal satisfaction? Or what is the pleasure we receive from pride, the gratification of luxurious appetite, or the indulgence of the highest animal delight, compared to this luxury of the mind, the more natural gratification of our humanity? But while the good people were loading me with their blessings, I had the agreeable surprize of seeing Amelia enter the room, accompanied by Lucius and his sister; for as they lived but at a small distance from the farmer's, she chose to walk softly after the young man, in order to meet them, and to let them know that I was an entire stranger to the visit she requested from them. Seized with a sudden emotion, my heart fluttered with a painful joy, and throbbed with a sweet, yet tumultuous, ecstacy. I hastily arose, hardly having the power to stay to desire my old friends to take no notice of what had passed, and running to the door, in an eager transport, embraced Marilla, at the same time shooting a glance at her dear brother. We went into the orchard together. We talked like friends, who had not seen each other for a long time, full of spirit, full of affection; till at last, after having taken two or three turns, Amelia and Marilla, telling me with a laugh, that they would leave me for a few minutes, and instantly striking off to the most distant part of the orchard, seated themselves under a tree, and by their absence left room for a more delightful conversation; but tho' Lucius was now very sensible that he was dear to me, he could not enter upon the tender subject without confusion; he at first enquired

quired after my health; complained that he was denied the pleasure of seeing me, and then, with a sigh, let me know how much he thought himself obliged to Amelia for procuring him a satisfaction that he had so long languished for. But why, Sir, said I, willing to draw him to an explanation, do you complain of your being deprived of my company? Is that such a terrible misfortune? Yes, my dear Felicia, replied he, trembling and casting down his eyes, it is an insupportable misfortune. Did you but know, Madam, with what anguish I support your absence; with what cruel inquietudes I count the tedious minutes; while my heart, here he paused, unable to proceed, while every joint quivered with fear, but at last resuming) while my heart struggles to be near you; were you sensible of that tumult of passion, and all those nameless dear sensations which fill my breast, O Felicia! your wonder would cease, and you would rather be surprized that any consideration could prevent my flying to you? His embarrassment now seemed to encrease, while he waited for my answer, and indeed I was going to endeavour to rally him on his pretended Platonic friendship; to endeavour, I say, for I am sadly afraid I should have made but an odd appearance with my affected gaiety; for my heart was too much softened to permit me to laugh at him; however one touching glance changed my resolution, and obliged me to behave more naturally; that is, to thank him for what was so perfectly agreeable to me. I am obliged to you, Sir, said I, for that deep concern you express for me; but were I more sensible that I deserved it, I might give greater credit to what you tell me; however, I can do no less than thank you for your complaisance. Ah, Madam, returned he with more resolution, (while a darting joy flushed in his cheek, and in a moment mingled an air of delight amidst the tender languishment of his countenance) your merit sufficiently authorises the ardor of my passion. I feel the force of your charms, they run thro' my heart, and captivate every thought; but chiefly that amiable virtue, that sanctity of manners, and all those dear unutterable graces, which perpetually blossom with fresh beauties and undecaying charms, fill my ravished

soul,

soul, and inspire a tender admiration and distant awe.

You see, Madam, that these silent lovers, who are struck dumb with a gush of passion too soft and powerful to be expressed, have their tongues no sooner unlocked, than they burst into heroics, and talk as differently from the polite gentlemen of the more stubborn mold, who have language at command, as if they were another species of beings. Here the heart says every thing, and dictates not only the words, but the minutest glance, and the least motion: every feature has a voice, and the whole man proclaims the power of love. For my part, I freely confess that flattery never appeared half so charming as it did now. A sweet enthusiasm possessed all my soul, and I could not help thinking how much better this dear man deserved a compliment of this kind than myself. But the next thought gave a bitter dash to this exultation of heart, and made me reply, in a mild tone, You are much to blame to entertain such romantic sentiments of me; which, I assure you, I have not vanity enough to think I deserve; but, however, were I ever so worthy of your esteem and tenderest affection, yet the thought that I am not at my own disposal, and the difficulty you may expect to meet with from my father, who has an undoubted right to dispose of me, should make you endeavour to forget me, and conquer a passion which, I fear, will prove fatal to your repose. This answer gave an immediate damp to his transport, and seemed to throw him into a fresh confusion; however, fixing his eyes upon me, with a languid yet piercing air, O my dear Felicia, cried he, do you indeed blame the unconquerable tenderness of my heart? Would you persuade me to erase your lovely image from my soul? Alas! I am too sensible that I have no reason to flatter myself, that your father will ever favour my aspiring wishes, yet, whatever is the consequence, I must love you still—I must ever love you. Nor can I, tho' surrounded with difficulties that oppose my happiness, even wish that I loved you less. But, ah! Madam, if you desire that I should forget you, I am wretched indeed!

With

With what irresistible softness were these last words uttered! his eyes swelled with a starting tear, which, with conscious dignity and shame, he endeavoured to call back, as a mark of a too effeminate weakness. Every speaking feature described the strong emotions which agitated his soul with all the torturing agonies that can arise from the tenderest despair, while pity and love, and dear compassion, shot through my heart, and filled all my mind with a virtuous and decent softness. I looked upon him; but what did this look tell him? Certainly all that I felt; for my eyes were then incapable of speaking a falsehood, and, Oh Lucius, said I, need I tell you that I am far from wishing it in your power to forget me? Yet, methinks, if that was necessary to your happiness, I could suffer a great deal to procure it; and perhaps a conquest of this kind would not cost me less than it would you. Could you but procure my father's consent, we might both be happy — but that I fear you will never obtain. — No; neither you nor I ought to hope for it, — And I here protest that I will never be your's without his approbation. — Not even your merit, great as it is, shall ever make me forget that I have a father — a kind and indulgent father — never shall any consideration prevail with me to forfeit my duty to God or to him. This resolution you will not — you cannot condemn. No, my dear dear Felicia, returned he, with his eyes sparkling with a languid joy; my love is too pure to suffer me either to involve you in your father's displeasure, or to tempt you to offend heaven; so far from laying snares for your virtue and honour, I would die in their defence, and sacrifice all that is dear to me, to preserve them inviolate. But O what transporting goodness! do you indeed love me? — Is it possible? — Help me to support the rapture of this ecstatic thought — or rather teach me how to merit your father's favour. — What means would not I employ to obtain it! — Sure if he is such a tender father as you describe him, he must have some regard to your inclinations in an affair of such infinite consequence to your happiness. But Oh! this disproportion of fortune! — that is the obstacle. — And

———And can there be a greater in the opinion of a tender parent?———Yes, sure, to a wise and tender parent there may.

But, Madam, I must not forget to mention one circumstance that I am sure will make you smile. In the height of his rapture he seized my hand, and squeezing it with a strong and sudden grasp, hurt my fingers so that I could hardly forbear crying out; I am sure if he had observed my looks, he would have found that I made most frightful faces: he then pressed it to his lips, and taking it from thence, grasped my poor fingers again with the same convulsion of passion, till slackening the tender pressure as his thoughts returned to my father, he at last held my hand so loose that my numb'd fingers could scarcely feel that he held them at all. But a shame on my extreme sensibility, that gave occasion to these intolerable extasies! What tender words had I uttered! Dear Madam, let no prudes or coquettes ever read my letters, for I shall certainly never be able to stand the censure of the one, or raillery of the other. But to proceed:

Melting with the high-wrought rapture, which seemed to sublime our souls, while it raised us to a degree of felicity almost too exquisite to be supported, we mutually opened our hearts, and with a confidence of being beloved, reciprocally confessed the tender sensations that swelled our bosoms. All my soul was delight! A delight pure as the rapture of ætherial spirits! his, transporting extasy!

- “ 'Tis not the coarser tie of human laws,
- “ Unnatural oft, and foreign to the mind,
- “ That binds our peace, but harmony itself,
- “ Attuning all our passions into love;
- “ Where friendship full exerts his softest power,
- “ Perfect esteem and sympathy of soul,
- “ Thought meeting thought, and will preventing will,
- “ With boundless confidence: for nought but love
- “ Can answer love, and render bliss secure.

T H O M S O N.

But

88 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE.

But lost in this charming intercourse of souls, we forgot that it was time to depart, till my cousin with an unwelcome intrusion, and more unwelcome message, came to put us mind that the sun was setting, and that it was time to return home; when with reluctant hearts, after bidding a tender adieu, and embracing Marilla, I tore myself from them, and hastened back with Amelia to my aunt.

You, I hope, Madam, will excuse the weakness I so freely confess to you; softened by the scene of distress I had just been a witness of, the unexpected presence of my dear Lucius had probably a much greater effect than it would have had, if my mind had not been thus previously intendered. However, nothing can enoble the soul like a virtuous passion. It inspires a thousand delicacies, a thousand virtues, which, without it, we should certainly have no idea of.

I am, Madam, with my sincerest respects to his Lordship, and my most ardent prayers for the continuance of your mutual happiness,

Your LADYSHIP'S,
Most obedient Servant,
FELICIA.

L E T T E R XIV.

MADAM,

THOUGH your impatience to hear from me is very obliging, yet it lays me under a necessity of entertaining you with abundance of impertinencies; but if trifles can entertain, you have no reason to be dissatisfied. Wrapt up in obscurity, I hear nothing of the fate of princes, or the fall of contending nations. I have now no ambition to enquire after such important events: an humble swain engrosses all my attention, tho' I hardly ever see him. I converse with few besides the people of the groves, who (pretty warblers!) are my constant companions; yet you would have me incessantly writing. Upon my word, Madam, you are quite unreasonable. I can hardly think it possible that a month's silence can give you all this impatience. But
your

your friendship is an excuse that I must admit, and be
impertinent when you command it.

My mind is now in an unaccountable situation, strangely divided between hope and fear, and tossed with a variety of contending passions. Still teased with the addresses of Mellifont, his company becomes every day more insupportable. Not that, he is really a disagreeable companion; but while he is a perpetual obstacle to my seeing Lucius, it is no wonder if his gayest flights, humorous and diverting as they may appear to others, only serve to encrease my spleen and heighten my disgust. The consideration that his unwelcome intrusion deprives me of that dear and softening pleasure I should otherwise enjoy from the cordial glances, and all the pleasing intercourses of love that might pass between Lucius and me, poisons the satisfaction I should otherwise receive from his sprightly airs: airs that have not the least conformity with the tenderly pensive disposition of my mind.

One day last week being disturbed with abundance of gloomy reflections, all turning upon the absence of my lover, and the opposition I expect to meet with from my father, Mellifont glided into my room with a dancing-step and his usual assurance, and an affectation of all that ease and negligence of behaviour that can only spring from a mind entirely satisfied with itself. He sung *Rosy-Bowers*, humm'd an Italian air, and every minute digressed from the song, either to make application to me, or to utter some tender thing which intruded upon his thoughts; but every thing was expressed with such a mixture of the soft and ridiculous, as would have forced a smile from any one that had less reason to be melancholy. But I was too perverse to be moved by his fantastick behaviour, to shew even by my looks the least mark of approbation.

Deaf to the music of his voice, which is really very harmonious, and untouched by all his arts to charm me, he insensibly became more grave, when laying aside his frolic airs, Will nothing satisfy you, my charmer, said he, unless you see me sighing at your feet? Would you have me in dull languishment admire your beauties. and with a heavy sobbing heart tell you all my pain?

Well

Well, Madam, I confess myself your slave; but at the same time beg, that, cruel as you are, you will not triumph in your conquest, and insult over the victim of your charms.

Here he threw himself upon his knee, and taking one of my hands, which he tenderly pressed in his, See, my dear, said he, as great a conquest as ever love has made. In vain I have struggled to regain my liberty. All my wishes center in you; I love you with all the passionate softness that can fill the human breast: as tenderly as —as— Nay, Madam, for heaven's sake don't laugh at me, continued he, seeing me smile; but tell me sincerely now, don't I look very silly. I sigh like the fam'd knight-errants of old, and like them bending before the divine object of their sublimest wishes, beg, O thou adorable fair! that thou wilt mitigate the severity of my unhappy destiny, or suffer me to expire at your feet. Here, making a pause, he gently sunk his head upon my lap; when snatching away my hand, and precipitately arising, he could not prevent his falling upon the floor. Not all my melancholy could now prevent my laughing, had I not endeavoured to hinder it in order to carry on this comic scene. Lie there, cried I, thou unworthy knight, nor ever more appear before me, till thou bringest me the heads of those monsters that infest the woods, the trophies of thy prowess and renown. At this I flung out of the room, as if in a mighty passion, and stepping into the thickest part of the garden, indulged for a few minutes the burst of laughter, which I with difficulty retained till I was out of his hearing.

How dreadfully afraid is poor Mellifont of my abusing the power I have over him! he was just dissolving in softness; but in the moment when he was giving way to his passion, and throwing aside his sprightliness, which was now become unnatural, a smile recalled back his fears; his dread of my tyranny returned, and to prevent my taking advantage of his weakness, he was willing to turn all he had said into ridicule.

However, when I began to reflect a little, I could not help being afraid that I had affronted him by my ill-manners in leaving him so abruptly, and therefore
having

having now been near an hour in the garden, and imagining he was gone, returned to my aunt, in order to make my excuses to her; to whom I fancied he had complained, and who, probably would blame me for carrying the jest too far. But in my way stepping into the room where I had left him upon the floor, I found my doughty knight strutting about with an old rusty helmet on his head, and in his hand a pike which served for a spear, upon which was fixed the head of a fox, which he had luckily run down the day before. When stamping with his foot, his trusty 'squire entered with the stuffed skins of several badgers, and other beasts of prey, the spoils of his hall, when Mellifont bending one knee, laid them at my feet, and resting upon his spear, See, fair princess, said he, bowing low his head, a knight renown'd for acts of chivalry, who lays at your divine feet the ravagers of the mountains and the vallies, but lower still he would lay his heart. Incomparable lady, you see a slave whose magnanimous arm has made these horrid monsters tremble; yet his life depends upon the radiance of your smiles. Soften then with pity the beams of your eyes, lest their lightning, with too resplendent glory, should burn his shrivelled heart to cinders.

This set speech, which he uttered with the utmost gravity and solemnity, he had doubtless studied before he entered the room, and which he concluded with bending low to kiss my feet; when struggling against a smile, I assumed an air of inexorable sternness, and looking down on him with a lofty superiority and contempt, Avaunt, caitif vile, cried I, and think not to abuse my ears with thy audacious forgeries. Are these, wretch, the trophies of thy valour! where are the distressed virgins that thou hast delivered from the poisonous talons of fiery dragons, or the dreadful gripe of monstrous giants. Fly, coward, and attempt not to abuse my credulity with the carcasses of insects, or my weak arm shall chastise thy temerity. Here I turned hastily from him, and walking with a majestic stateliness seated myself at the other end of the room, in an easy chair, with as much dignity as if it had been a chair of state. But I had no sooner turned my back, than
 throwing

throwing away his masked ornaments, he stepped up to me singing, "Why do you fly, my dear," and immediately dropping his song, Don't you think, Madam, cried he, that we have acted our parts to perfection? upon my word, you do every thing with a grace. Your every air is charming. I only am defective; for I find, I shall do no wonders in the character of a redoubted champion for love; since after all my endeavours, I have been shamefully degraded, and cast from the dignity of my sublime station. Yet, Madam, you are sensible it was in disguise that you made me a convert to love; adorned like Flora with all the blooming graces of the smiling year, and incircled with the united fragrance of every opening flower, you captivated all my senses, and instantly made me that odd creature, called a whining, sighing lover. Upon my word, Madam, you could not have made a stranger metamorphosis had you fixed me a statue. Here he paused, but instantly recollecting himself, O Madam, cried he, smiling and rubbing his hands, I have a lucky thought; permit me to assume another disguise; as you first appeared to me a goddess, let me for once be disguised like a god; you shall receive me crown'd with ivy, and the glowing clusters of the swelling vine. In this appearance, who knows what wonders I may perform! Besides, can any thing better express the felicity that would, I am sure, arise from our union, than an emblem of that paradise, where the soft beauties of the opening year shall be blended with the yellow fruits of autumn, and all the charms of the luxuriant flowing bowl. In what exquisite happiness should we spend our days; you ever blooming; I, like Bacchus, ever frolic, gay and sprightly.

No, no, Sir, said I, the seasons may take their course for me; nor will I have any thing to do with your drunken god-ship. I therefore beg it as a favour that I may not be disturbed with such fooleries, which are very disagreeable to me. I had hardly uttered these words when, with the utmost surprise, I saw Lucius and Marilla enter the room; but it was a surprise accompanied with delight, I viewed his looks with conscious innocence, while no suspecting fear dim'd his eyes, nor

van jealousy discoloured his cheek. While I was embracing Marilla, Lucius and Mellifont met each other with the freedom of persons who had been long acquainted, and turning to me, I have heard, said he; that you are to have a little diversion, and if not over, would be glad to have a part in it. Hail! noble knight, cried he, clapping Mellifont on the shoulder, what mighty fate of arms is to be done by your helmit and lance? Mellifont seemed here a little confused, while I began to fear that my lover was acquainted with the passion of his rival; but examining again his countenance, my uneasiness vanished; for it had not the least tincture of disorder. But finding that Mellifont made no reply, Come, my friend, no evasions, rejoined he, I met your servant an hour ago, running home with all possible speed, and in such haste that he had hardly time to tell me the whimsical message you had given him, to strip your hall of its grim ornaments, and to bring them here with those rusty pieces of ancient heroism, your helmet and lance. And the lady of this house, doing my sister and I the honour to desire our company, I came filled with the hopes of seeing some of your diverting extravagancies.

Here Mellifont, assuming a chearful air, began the relation of this odd piece of Quixotism which he had carried on with such humour, and my aunt and Amelia coming in, could not help joining with Lucius and Marilla, in frequently interrupting him, by bursting into a general laugh; and indeed it was impossible for any one in the company to forbear. For though the story was comical enough of itself, yet the severe manner in which he lashed himself, with the romantic reflections he made upon his disgrace, rendered it infinitely extravagant: Nor indeed is it possible to give you any idea of this part of our diversion, except I could give you the varied tone of his voice, his looks, his air, and his minutest gesture.

The evening was spent with abundance of gaiety, while Lucius's good sense, and Mellifont's agreeable vivacity furnished great part of our entertainment. Nor were some of those soft and refined pleasures wanting, which I now find make up the most exquisite part of human

human happiness. 'Tis true, I could not enter into a particular conversation with my lover, much less indulge the innocent satisfaction of a private interview; but yet I sat near him, and methought my heart beat in that situation, much more freely than when he was far distant. My soul itself was all harmony! and inspired by his presence, every vein was harmony too. Strange! that the mind can be sensible of such delight from only a consciousness of a dear object's being near! what magnetic influence, what attractive power is in the person beloved, that from a circumstance so small, can inspire such tender joys, such delicate sensibilities of happiness? 'Tis true, I saw him with pleasure, I heard him with pleasure too; but yet I had an additional delight, more constant and uniform, from my being conscious that I was near him, which every seat farther from him would have sensibly decreased. You, Madam, can perhaps account for these pleasing emotions; and I desire you would let me know if you think it unreasonable, that upon these occasions there should be some secret sympathies, some dear inexpressible ways, by which souls expand themselves towards the dear person, and join in a soft ethereal embrace. I know you will laugh at this whimsical conceit; but no matter. The evening, I say, was spent agreeably, though we were obliged to be very cautious in our looks, to prevent suspicion; and indeed I was quite sparing in mine, for I seldom indulged the pleasure of examining his countenance. A precaution that was now absolutely necessary. However, might I frequently enjoy Lucius's company in the same manner, I should be more contented; but hardly ever to see him, and at the same time to have no prospect of having the difficulties removed, which obstruct this happiness, I freely confess, is more than I am well able to bear. I am afraid of having our mutual passion discovered, I tremble with the most dreadful apprehensions for fear it should come to my father's ears; and yet without this should be the case, it will for ever continue impossible for me to taste any true felicity.

O my dear friend, if my happiness is really dear to you, give me your advice, and teach me, if possible, to unite my duty to my father, with the tender sensations I feel

for

for Lucius, and to make them both subservient to the highest pleasure I can enjoy on earth. By what means shall I attack my father's heart? By what means shall Lucius procure his favour, and make him sensible of his merit? To effect this will be a task hard and difficult, and to have a share in promoting my happiness, will be an employment worthy of your friendship, and the most endearing proof you can possibly give me of your esteem and affection. With the sincerest and most tender respect, I am,

Your LADYSHIP'S
Most obedient Servant,
FELICIA.

L E T T E R XV.

IS it possible, Madam, that you can really give me such advice? What, to forget my dear father! to steel my heart against the soft impressions of filial duty! to be insensible of the strong and tender ties of nature, of the affectionate cares his heart has felt for me, and all those numberless instances of paternal kindness, which I have so often received from him! Shall I throw a cloud over the flattering prospects he has raised for me, and dis appoint all his fond views for my happiness, by casting off that right, which nature and the much more prevailing force of tenderness and love, have given him over me! No, Madam, I shall never be guilty of such ingratitude. I will never dispose of myself without his content; nor shall all your arguments, how plausible soever, prevail with me to give him a minute's uneasiness.

Pardon the freedom with which I reject your proposal? you never knew what it was to have a parent, and therefore can have but faint ideas of that solicitude, that unwearied concern which employs their thoughts; much less can you be sensible of the unspeakable obligations I am under to mine, the best of parents! and the best of father's! — But sure I am mistaken; you must have very strong ideas of paternal tenderness to say, that however offended he may be at first, affection will soon take place of resentment, and at last swallow

swallow up all thought of displeasure; when his eyes will be open to the merit of Lucius, and he may possibly be brought even to approve of your union. A reconciliation which you kindly promise to use your utmost endeavour to procure for us. But ah! my dear friend! can I presume on that affection which makes him dear to me? Can I offend him, from the thought that he is far from deserving such usage from me? And can I disclaim his authority and counsel, from the reflection that he deserves all my confidence, and my most grateful and affectionate regards? No, my dear, you must excuse me, your friendship blinds your judgment, and makes you give me advice that you would be far from taking yourself, were you in my circumstances. You would then have considered the vexation that must arise from a disappointment of the fondest hopes, the just provocation of seeing goodness abused, and the painful mixture of anger and love arising in the mind of an indulgent father, as the greatest evils; nor could you, I am sure, think of being the cause of all these dreadful perturbations without starting back, and instantly recoiling into duty.

Your ladyship finds now, what a troublesome persecution your kindness brings upon you: instead of acknowledging your goodness, and thanking you for the obliging concern you express for my happiness, I have been haranguing for I don't know how long on my duty to my ever-honoured pappas, in order to let you see what a good girl I am. But don't be offended, Madam, I have only been anticipating your own thoughts on the rights of parents. You will soon be of my mind; and a few months hence, I hope, will be able to write on this subject with a much better grace than I can pretend to do; since you will then, it is likely, find abundance of those tender cares, those dear undescribable solitudes arising in your heart, which I form but a distant idea of, from the impressions I have received from the paternal affection of one of the best of fathers.

The generous pity you express for Mellifont, proceeds undoubtedly from your humanity and natural goodness; but I find this pity does not deprive you of the pleasure
of

of diverting yourself with the oddness of his behaviour ; and the ridiculous manner in which he pays me his addresses ; but I am going to surprise you by letting you see that he is no longer to be pitied, since he is in a fair way of regaining his liberty ; or at least of falling into a more supportable bondage.

If you remember, Madam, I gave you in one of my letters an account of the concealed passion Amelia entertained for this gay spark of mine ; but hopeless as it then appeared, the engaging softness of her behaviour, and the natural sweetness of her disposition, added to that easy, unaffected freedom, and artless innocence which attends every thing she does, seem at length to have made an impression on him. But you could never guess from whom I received this news—— from Lucius, Madam. He made his rival his confidant. And here follows the letter I have just received from him on this occasion.

“ *Lovely* FELICIA,

“ **D**ELIGHTFUL as the reflection of your
 “ goodness is, while I indulge the transporting
 “ remembrance of that charming air with which
 “ you frankly confessed the tender regard you should
 “ always have for my happiness;—— you love !
 “ you return my passion ! what an extatic thought !
 “ but it cannot enable me to support the tedious delay,
 “ the painful absence, the torturing suspense, and the
 “ pleasing yet dreadful mixture of hope and fear with
 “ which I wait to know that sentence from your father,
 “ which must confirm me blest beyond expression, or
 “ throw the thickest gloom over all my joys.—— O
 “ my dear ! with what ardor do I long to see you ! I
 “ have a thousand things to say.

“ Yesterday my friend Mellifont came to see me,
 “ with an air more thoughtful than seemed consistent
 “ with his sprightly volatile temper ; when our friend-
 “ ship, which began very early, and which upon his
 “ late return from the tour of Europe, has been revived
 “ with all its warmth, engaged me to press him to
 “ communicate the cause of his discontent. He told
 “ me that that was the design of his visit, and proposing

“ my going into my study, where he might be secure
 “ from interruption, began there a story which filled
 “ my mind with every wild agitation. It is with shame,
 “ said he, that I confess my weakness, I love Felicia.
 “ ——— O what a stab did these words give me ! his
 “ wealth, his form, his wit, his humour, with every
 “ qualification capable of charming the fair, rush’d
 “ upon my mind, and gave me the first pangs of jea-
 “ lously ; tormenting passion ! but recollecting that he
 “ was certainly ignorant of my being his rival, I endea-
 “ voured to arm myself with patience : he then enume-
 “ rated your several perfections, and dwelt upon your
 “ charms, while every commendation encreased my
 “ disquiet : O, Madam, can you forgive my unjust
 “ fears ? ——— fears injurious to your honour ——— but
 “ while I made the comparison between him and my-
 “ self, how was it possible to help being alarmed, since
 “ I myself must have justified your choice in rejecting
 “ me for him. But these fears were short-lived and
 “ transient, they soon gave way to a healing joy, which
 “ composed the impetuous tumult of my soul ; and with
 “ the utmost delight I heard him add, Yet you would
 “ admire, Lucius, to see how cold, how insensi-
 “ ble she is of all my endeavours to please her. I
 “ meet with nothing but perfect indifference. Her
 “ very looks speak her insensibility. ——— Ah !
 “ had she but half the winning softness, the ten-
 “ der graces of Amelia ! ——— but she is incapable
 “ of softness ——— but don’t you think Amelia
 “ pretty near as beautiful as Felicia ? ——— It
 “ must be confessed however, that this lady has a much
 “ more agreeable temper. ——— What a pleasing air !
 “ what a charming simplicity ! ——— Don’t you think it
 “ would pique Felicia’s pride to see me change the
 “ object of my homage, and pay those assiduous ad-
 “ dresses to her cousin, which she with so much scorn
 “ contemns ? ——— It is a pleasing thought, and I am re-
 “ solved to punish this haughty beauty, by letting her see
 “ that it is now out of her power to render me that
 “ whining, ridiculous fellow she endeavours to make
 “ me. Tell me now, Lucius, am I not in the right ?
 “ They are both ladies of extraordinary merit, replied

“ I

" I with the utmost calmness; but you ought not to im-
 " pute Felicia's dislike to the want of natural goodness;
 " pray, Mellifont, is it such a crime to be blind to your
 " perfections? She would doubtless approve of you as
 " a friend, tho' not as a lover: and I think I know her
 " well enough to affirm, that so far from being offend-
 " ed at your transferring your affections to her cousin,
 " she will use her endeavours to promote your mutual
 " felicity. Do you think so? returned he; then I am
 " resolved to try the experiment. I have found some-
 " thing so engaging in Amelia's behaviour, while I paid
 " my addresses to her cousin, that I have long looked
 " upon her with the highest esteem; she pleases with-
 " out design, and does the most trifling actions with
 " such a grace, that they forcibly insinuate themselves
 " into the heart. It is, I am sure, in her power to
 " make me happy. I endeavoured to fix this resolu-
 " tion, and after several other things being said on the
 " same subject, he took leave, with a firm intention of
 " transferring all his tender sentiments to Amelia.

" O my dear Felicia! tell me what I must think of
 " myself for this behaviour. What judgment will you
 " form of it? Sure it cannot offend you! You are
 " too artless to dissemble either with him or me. But
 " however, I beg to see you, and with the most affecti-
 " onate ardor entreat you to give me an opportunity of
 " expressing my gratitude, and telling you how much I
 " am,

" Dearest MADAM,

" Your affectionate Servant,

" LUCIUS."

As soon as I had read this letter, I left my chamber,
 and made haste to communicate it to Amelia, who I
 did not question would be highly pleased with the con-
 tents; but to my no small surprise, as well as satisfac-
 tion, I found her engaged in a close conversation with
 Mellifont; so returning to my apartment, scrawled
 over the above in order to send it away by this night's
 post. I have hardly time now to thank you in

100 FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE

form for your many favours, and therefore, in haste,
subscribe myself,

Your LADYSHIP'S
Most obliged Friend,
FELICIA.

L E T T E R XVI.

LAST week, my dear friend, I informed you that the gay and janty Mellifont, finding himself unable with all his airs to ingratiate himself so far into my esteem, as to prevail with me to listen with pleasure to his addresses, was so poor a hero as to change his mistress, and direct his smiles and sighs to Amelia, a thing which however common in real life, is seldom or never heard of in romance; yet this instance of his prudence, so far from alarming my pride, is a constant source of satisfaction and joy. And if you have yet read over my letter, you must have observed too, that I told you I left them together while I wrote you an account of this change in my affairs.

As soon as he was gone Amelia came running to my chamber with her eyes sparkling with joy, and an air of the utmost satisfaction; What do you think, my dear! cried she, as soon as she saw me at a distance; the engaging Mellifont has been saying some of the most agreeable tender things to me.—— O he is a charming man! He came to-day as usual, when thinking that it was to you we owed his visit, I told him I would let you know that he was here, at the same time turning in order to go and seek for you, but he prevented me —— he took hold of me by the hand, and desiring me to stay, said that his business was now with me. I went with him into the parlour, when seating himself by me with such a soft look as I have sometimes seen him fix upon you, I know Madam, said he, you will be surpris'd at what I am going to say to you; Felicia's rigour and your charms have cured my passion for her. I have been unable to support that lady's constant indifference, and am not of a temper to indulge a softness that can be of no service to me. I
will

will never be the dupe of a girl's vanity, nor whine in doleful ditty the dismal story of despairing love. I am resolved to be happy, and would have you observe that it is out of the power of any of the fair sex to make me miserable. This, Madam, continued Amelia, was to prevent my using him as you have done; for he immediately added so many agreeable compliments, and such strong protestations of the sincerity of his love, that I could never be weary of hearing him——O he is a charming man! This change is happy for us both: Is it not, Madam?——I dare say he is perfectly sincere.

Here Amelia took time to breathe; for her extasy had carried her on with such rapidity, that in the exultation of her heart, she hardly knew how to give a moment's truce to her transport. Her whole soul overflowed with joy, and it overflowed so fast, that her utterance could hardly keep pace with the swift course of her ideas. The most trifling word had the air of rapture, and every sentence the dignity of triumph.

However, she no sooner gave me leave to speak, than embracing her with much affection, Yes, my dear, cried I smiling, this revolution is happy for us both, and I sincerely congratulate you on the conquest of a heart that has so long been dear to you. Lucius has lost a rival that he had reason to fear, and I have no longer the dread of disobliging my father by refusing to marry a gentleman I cannot love; but I have yet no prospect of his ever giving Lucius his consent: that is as far off as ever; while you, who yesterday was ready to envy the poor felicity I enjoyed, of having ym almost hopeless passion returned, have in a moment obtained your wishes. My aunt will approve your mutual tenderness, and in a few days cement your happy union; how vastly is your happiness superior to mine! O my dear Felicia, returned she again, can't you rejoice with me, without these bitter reflections? Expect the same delightful turn in your affairs, and depend upon my assistance in procuring it. A father's compliance is not sure so hard to obtain, when the felicity of a dear and only child is at stake. Let us communicate every thing to Lucius. I will engage my mamma, as soon as possible,

to take us with her to pay his mother and Marilla a visit. We shall find him at home. He shall know he has had a rival, and we will tell him the reason of its being kept so long a secret.—He knows already the state of our affairs, replied I, and had acquainted me with them, before you knew your own happiness.—Here are a few lines that I received from him on this subject, just after I rose from dinner.

At this she took the letter out of my hand with an eager surprise, her face was covered with a modest blush, which discovered some confusion; and her eyes were in a moment glewed to the paper, which seemed to renew her joy. She read it over several times, and seemed to dwell with extasy on that part which related the conversation between my lover and Mellifont; but at last returning it, This is a proof, cried she, with a fresh kindling satisfaction in her looks, that he is sincere in his professions. It is not a rash hasty fit of disgust that makes him fly to me! He has examined his heart; he consults his friend; he loves me almost as well as I do him! This authorises the delight I feel, and proves that I have not been mistaken in thinking him sincere.—He has fixed his choice, and I shall be happy!

These words were inspired by a transport that made her exalt her voice much above her usual manner of speaking, so that my aunt, who was entering the room at the same time, heard her very distinctly. We both saw her in the same moment, and both were under some confusion at this unexpected interruption, since we could not guess how much she had overheard of what we were unwilling to inform her of. However this disorder was very short; for she came forwards with a smile, accompanied with an air that had not the least mark of displeasure. Heigh-day! cried she (with her eyes alternately fixed upon her daughter and me) what is the matter, pray? What all in raptures! Mayn't your mother, Amelia, partake of your satisfaction? I am come to claim a share in your confidence, and to desire you would let me know Mellifont's business with you to-day, and the substance of that long conversation

versation you had together. Come, be free, my dear, and tell me all.

Here I found that she was still ignorant of Lucius's passion, when observing that Amelia cast down her eyes, and with a visible disorder hesitated how to reply, I instantly removed her embarrassment. O, Madam, said I, we have strange things to tell you. Mellifont, finding my heart too faintly to be softened by all his endeavours, has shook off my chains, and seeks for happiness from the more gentle disposition of Amelia's soul. While paying his addresses to me, he discovered a thousand charms in her, and therefore wisely consulting his own happiness, has changed the object of a hopeless passion, for one who he has reason to flatter himself will prove more favourable. And I dare say, Madam, since you approved of his being your nephew, you will not be less willing he should be your son. No, child, returned she, so far from having any objection to him, I freely confess that I should be proud of his alliance. But are you sure that he is sincere in his pretensions? Inferior as Amelia's fortune will be to his, I should highly resent my daughter's being made a property of. This is perhaps only an artifice by which he hopes to awaken your jealousy. My jealousy! Madam, cried I with some warmth; no, he could never have the vanity to think it. I dare say he is in earnest, and so far from being offended at his preferring my cousin to me, I rejoice in his change, and look upon it with peculiar satisfaction. Well, whatever is his design, rejoined my aunt, a little time will discover it. However, Felicia, I would have you believe that I am not much less concerned for your happiness, than I am for Amelia's; you are both very dear to me;—— but your affections are perhaps already engaged.—— Here I blushed in my turn, which I fancy she took notice of; for after a short pause, she only added, But it is not my business to examine you on this subject; though I should be very glad to have a share in your confidence. As for you, Amelia, I hope you won't scruple to discover to me the situation of your heart. You know I am too tender a mother not to consult your inclinations, as well as my own. These last words were expressed in a most moving tone;

while my cousin, who had been hitherto silent could not conceal the rising tear, which with mute eloquence expressed her gratitude, and thanked her for her indulgent goodness; when starting up, she sprung into her arms, and gave her a feeling embrace, which the fond mother, with conscious happiness in her looks, returned with equal ardor.

You can't conceive, Madam, how much I was affected with the goodness of the parent, and the confidence which it immediately produced in the mind of the child. Amelia, dissolved in filial tenderness, acknowledged her regard for Mellifont; while my aunt approved her passion; approved it with an air of joy, though still doubting the sincerity of his pretensions. When to remove her scruples, my cousin promised to make her a judge, by giving her an account of his future behaviour.

I was all this while a stupid observer, and was almost ashamed not to have a share in these pleasing caresses. Do I indulge a passion, said I to myself, that I am afraid of acknowledging to a person so well worthy of all my confidence? Will a lady that has so much consideration for her daughter, as to tell her that she is too tender a parent not to consult her child's inclinations rather than her own; a woman that is such an excellent judge of real merit, be insensible of the perfections of my dear Lucius, and disapprove of my passion for so worthy, so valuable a man? One whom she treats with so much respect, and on whose virtue, strong sense, and other valuable accomplishments, I have heard her make so many encomiums. I can't believe it. She will be pleased too with my confidence, approve my discernment, and give me her assistance to work upon my father. Well then, I will boldly confess my tender sentiments for this engaging youth, and unterrified at the smallness of his estate, will plead the cause of virtue against that of wealth; I will gain her over by my respectful confidence, work upon her pity, and engage her to give us her friendly assistance, her compassionate and endearing advice.

This was my final resolution; but though I had no reason to prevent my putting it in execution, yet I no
sooner

sooner attempted to open my lips upon this too interesting subject, than my courage failed, my heart with soft and fluttering timidity rebelled against the dictates of reason ; a thousand scruples instantly arose ; I blushed ; conscious shame held fast my tongue ; the first word died upon my lips ; my confidence vanished ; and I found the words, *I love*, so hard to be uttered, that I was forced, in spite of myself, to continue silent, and leave unattempted the too softening confession ; while all the advantages I so reasonably expected from her assistance were unable to surmount the weakness I laboured under. What a painful perplexed situation was this ! and how hard is it for a virtuous mind, to prevent that shame which ought only to accompany vice, from attending the most laudable passions ! The mind, enfeebled by custom, is taught to regard that as a weakness, which is its highest perfection ; nor is it strange that the most honourable and decent love should be accompanied with a modest reluctant shame, since we are taught to blush, at being discovered in the practice of the noblest and most sublime virtues.

My aunt did not stay long ; softened by her own affection, and the tenderness of her daughter, she left us with all that satisfaction in her looks, that could arise from the contemplation of the felicity of her child ; when the perturbation of my mind, occasioned by the struggle between my diffidence and reason, insensibly dispersed, and at last left me at leisure calmly to sympathise in the happiness of my friends. Hope now gains the ascendant in my mind, and the indulgence of this good mother makes me flatter myself with the same from a father, no less affectionately concerned for my interest.

With my sincerest respects to his lordship, I am, Madam, with all possible affection,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

L E T T E R XVII.

M A D A M,

IT is not without the appearance of reason that you are surpris'd at the unaccountable manner in which we dispose of our hearts ; but if we look around us, we shall find cause to vindicate the grave, the sedate and tranquil Amelia, for loving a person of a temper so widely different from her own. It is not always a resemblance of ourselves in temper, any more than in features, that constitute the strongest attractive. On the contrary, the thoughtful mind, conscious of its own incapacity to render itself happy, is naturally charmed with one whose airy sprightliness is best adapted to give it relief, and vary its pleasures by inspiring the delightful relaxations of the more lively social enjoyments ; while the vivacious volatile temper expects the same satisfaction from the sagacious, and more sober reflections of solid thought and decent prudence. Thus we frequently find that a contrast of this kind, gives a variety, which adds a poignancy to their joys, while persons, whose souls nature seems to have formed in the same mould, too often drag on a dull insipid life ; or trifle it away with a mixture of alternate levity and spleen. Yet after all, it must be confessed, that however various their tempers, it is absolutely necessary there should be a conformity, at least, of passion and sentiment.

Methinks I write now with the gravity of a philosopher ; and that in accounting for Amelia's tenderness for Mellifont, I have very handsomely apoilogized for that of your trifling friend, for the grave and learned Lucius.

Yesterday being the time we had appointed to pay Marilla's mother a visit, my aunt, Amelia and I, set out on foot, as soon as we had dined, after having given orders for the coach to fetch us back in the evening. The day was exceeding fine ; and the air rendered cool and refreshing by a gentle breeze, which just waved the yellow corn, that opening in a narrow path gave us an easy and delightful passage ; while the bearded ears

hung

hung their heavy heads furcharged with myraids of glittering pearls, the fruits of a hasty shower, which before we had set out, had refreshed the earth, and embalmed the air with a fragrance, infinitely more pleasing than that which arises from the powdered toupée of an accomplished beau, or the odours which scent your ladyship's gloves. A thousand clouds with intermingled gold and purple, of various lights and shades, adorned the wide, the blue immense, or dimm'd the too ardent rays of the dazzling sun; while the insatiate eye greedily surveyed the wide stretch'd plenty, or the distant woods embrowned by autumn, or glowing with a lengthen'd verdure of various hues. Here friendly chat and innocent gaiety kept up our spirits, deluded away the time, and helped to increase the tender joy which glowed in my bosom, at every thought of my speedily seeing Lucius. I saw the farmer, to whom I had given so seasonable a relief, with honest front giving orders to his servants. My heart sprung again with a bounding joy; I found myself in the fields I had preserved in his possession, and felt more charms in the great abundance that surrounded me from the reflection of its contributing to the advancement of an honest, though unfortunate family, than the most rapacious miser in viewing his hoarded treasures. He perceived me, when, with an humble scrape and grateful look, he silently expressed his acknowledgements.

At last we arrived at the end of our walk, when as Marilla had been privately acquainted the night before with our intended visit, we were sure to find Lucius at home; they both met us at the gate, accompanied by their mother, where they all with glowing extasy paid us their compliments, and conducted us into a neat and well furnished parlour. Here we took some refreshment, which being over, Amelia judging by her own heart, that I should be glad of an opportunity of a spare conversation, asked me with a smile, if I was not too weary with my walk, to take a turn with her in the garden, while Lucius and Marilla, with a sparkling intelligent kind of satisfaction in their looks, offered their service to accompany us.

Here

Here we had a most tender interview; I explained the reason of my conduct, in concealing from him the addresses of Mellifont, and thanked him for the assistance he had given me, in sparing me the trouble of being teized by his importunities; while he kissed my hand with eager transports of delight. We then consulted how to procure my father's consent; but had come to no determination, when we were interrupted by my aunt, whom we saw coming down the alley to meet us. However, she did not discover much surprise at seeing us together without our companions, who we immediately told her were gone to gather some fruit, which indeed was the excuse they had made use of in leaving us; but we had hardly made this apology for their absence, when we perceived them returning; and my aunt telling us that she was afraid we should fatigue ourselves too much, desired we would walk in; we consented and immediately followed her.

Sophronia, Lucius's mother, entertained me with all that ease and polite freedom, which is natural to a well-bred woman; and the part she bore in the conversation sufficiently discovered her good sense, and the delicacy and justness of her sentiments, while an air of sweetness gave a grace to every thing she said. We were entertained with several subjects, without the least connection, most of which were very trifling.

Our conversation was however interrupted by a servant, who entering with a letter delivered it to my aunt, at the same time telling her, that as it had been left for her just before our coachman set out, he thought proper to bring it with him. She received it with an air of joy, when breaking it open, and casting her eyes at the bottom, she told me it came from my father, and in a minute after added with a smile, and a tone of surprise, that he was preparing to make a journey to see me. What a sudden confusion did this unexpected news give me! The joy that I was ready to receive, was suspended by the shock of a rising apprehension, that something extraordinary was the cause of this journey. Sure, said I to myself, he can't be acquainted with our mutual passion! What an alarm did this doubt give me! my heart trembled with a very
painful

painful disorder ; and it now flutters in the same uneasy manner, while I acquaint you that I dread to see him. But what have I done, that I should be afraid of seeing my father's face?—— Oh my dear Lucius !—— to be deprived of the hopes of living with thee—— to see thee no more ! Oh ! I can't bear to think of it. It was then impossible to prevent my apprehensions from making some alteration in my countenance.—— I endeavoured to conceal them under a look of surprise ; but, in spite of myself, that surprise had some traces of uneasiness.—— I struggled with myself in vain—— my aunt perceived it.—— I saw she did ; and that increased my disorder ; but she had too much good-nature to increase it still more, by seeming to take notice of it.—— Lucius too had his eyes fixed upon mine, while I perceived that he every moment changed colour, and appeared not less alarmed than myself. However it was now time to retire, and I was soon mistress enough of myself to take my leave of these dear friends with a tolerable good grace.

What will be the subject of my next letter I can't guess ; my father's presence will undoubtedly make a considerable alteration in my affairs, and I am now in the utmost suspense, yet dread to know the reason of his journey. Dear Madam, if you can inform me what I ought to think of it, let me hear from you by the next post.

With my sincerest respects to his Lordship, I am,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

L E T T E R XVIII.

Oh ! M A D A M,

I HAVE strange things to tell you. My father arrived this morning, and has thrown me into such confusion that I am hardly able to write to you. I was looking out of my window bewildered with a mazy crowd of useless reflections, and had stood for some time without motion, when I was roused from this stupid

stupid situation of mind, by a coach and six, which drove in a cloud of dust at a great rate towards our house, attended by several servants. I did not see them till they were near. They alighted at the gate, and almost in the same moment I heard my father's voice. Forgetful of my fears, every care was in an instant swallowed up by duty: my heart glowed with affection. It is my father! it is my father! I cried aloud. He lifted up his eyes and saw me, when starting from the window, I ran down stairs with the utmost eagerness to embrace him. I met him in the hall. I flew into his arms, when turning from me to avoid my embrace, he desired me coldly to walk in; but at the same time gave a sigh, and fixed upon me a look, which discovered how much he suffered by this restraint. Ah, Madam! you can't conceive what a shock this behaviour gave me. I burst into tears, and went into the parlour, followed by Amelia.

Tell me, my dear cousin, said I, as soon as I could speak, tell me what shall I do. How must I support my father's anger? Do you think now I deserve to be treated in this manner?——I can't bear to think of offending him. I know it is hard for him to use me unkindly,——But sure he has no cause to give me such a cold reception.——He has heard of my loving Lucius; but is that such a crime?——Alas! I must be unhappy, and Lucius must be so too.

I was interrupted in this bitter complaint, which was intermingled with sighs and tears, by hearing my father at the door, who entered the room just as Amelia was going to endeavour to comfort me. She sat near me with her looks fixed upon mine; he saw us both in a moving situation, and when we lifted up our eyes to his, the mutual tears that for a moment almost stopped our sight, trickled down our cheeks, and seemed to make a strong impression on his countenance. When turning to my aunt, who stood behind him at the door, he told her, he desired to be a few minutes alone with me. At this, Amelia arose, and after pressing my hand with the utmost tenderness, retired with my aunt.

My

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My father, as if he knew not how to behave, and perhaps wanting time to compose his mind, in order to treat me with a sternness suitable to the subject of his complaint, and which I dare say, he had need of all his resolution to support, took a few turns about the room, with the appearance of the utmost disorder; but at last growing more composed, he fastened the door and seated himself by me, giving me a fixed look, which had a mixture of anger and sensibility, while I held down my head, drowned in tears, and almost stifled with my sighs; and indeed I was so intimidated by his presence, that I hardly durst lift up a glance to observe his countenance. My heart ached in the most painful manner, and seemed to struggle to vent its complaints. At last seeming to recollect himself, Felicia, it is with shame, said he, in a grave tone, that I see you the disgrace of my family. Foolish girl! what could induce you to forfeit your honour? My fondness made me flatter myself with abundance of pleasing hopes. I have considered you as my only child, as the picture of your dear mother, and you must have been sensible that my whole happiness was bound up in yours. What then, ungrateful creature, could induce you to throw off my authority, and to suffer yourself to be seduced by an artful designing villain. Alas! is this the fruits of that virtue and good-sense, in which I have prided myself? Is this the effects of that delicacy and innocent wit, in which I weakly fancied that you resembled your dear mother? This the reward of all my tender cares and pleasing hopes? But you shall know that a father's resentment is to be feared. It is still in my power to punish you.——— And I assure you, the rascal that has corrupted your innocence, and made me an unhappy parent, shall feel the effects of my rage.

How was it possible, Madam, for me to support such reproaches from a father, whom I had never injured, even in thought? To hear Lucius, my dear Lucius, reproached in the coarsest epithets! to hear him charged with seducing me! to be thought ungrateful! to be regarded as a monster, who had no sense of honour and duty! my heart rose with indignation.———I could

not bear these unjust reflections.——But in the same moment observing the agitations of my father's countenance, and reflecting upon what he now suffered for me, I dissolved in affection, and with a precipitation, inspired by a sudden impulse of soul, threw myself at his feet. Hear me, Sir, hear me, cried I (with a resolution inspired by my innocence; while my eagerness to vindicate myself, filled me with an impatience that made me instantly lose sight of all that diffidence and restraint which had before kept me silent) let me know of what I am accused.——In what respect have I forfeited my honour?——How have I offended you?——Tell me, dear father,——tell me in what instance I have abused your goodness——Can you ask *me* that question, returned he, in an inexorable tone?——Have I not sufficient reason to be offended?——There, read that, cried he, and blush to think, that you dare presume to impose upon me by an air of innocence; I know the world too well to suffer myself to be deceived by these artifices. You will there find, that however secretly you have managed your intrigues, I have been but too well acquainted with them.

Here throwing me a letter and arising hastily, he walked to the door, with an air that shewed him not in the least softened at the simplicity of my behaviour, when stopping short, as if blaming himself for leaving me on the floor, he returned with equal speed to help me up. But I arose before he came to me, when snatching up the letter, I thought, Sir, cried I in a resolute tone, that I should never be so unhappy as to be refused to be heard by my father; but however unkindly you are now pleased to treat me, it shall never make me forget my duty. At this I opened the letter, and he went out of the room. In a few minutes I no longer wondered at his treatment; my whole resentment was levelled at the wicked author of those malicious lines; and I could not help acquitting my father, and thinking his conduct highly reasonable, on a supposition that he believed those vile aspersions. You yourself, Madam, shall see the letter, that you may

may judge how grossly I have been abused, and I now transcribe it with the utmost exactness.

" SIR,

" **T**HO I am intyrlly unnown to you my regard for
 " your onner makes me lay before you an asare
 " in wich you are partikularly consarnnd tho i must
 " confes i have a uast deal of reluktans at communi-
 " katin the secret intreges of miss felisia for wom i
 " haue a grate affecshon but you will no all sooner or
 " latter i am uery sorry to tell you that unnown to her
 " aunt she kepes company with a yung gentleman of
 " little fortin wen compa.d with hers but it wud give
 " you too much consarn to say that her uarty is intyr-
 " ly lost i hope it is not quite so bad yet howiuar he
 " has don her a still grater ingury by korruptin her
 " mynd god nos nothin but my regard for her cud
 " make me send you this affliktive neus euery word of
 " wich i ashur you upon my onner is strikly treu i wud
 " aduise you to send for her up to toun as priuatly as
 " possible her ant loves her as euery body dus that nos
 " her and it wud be a sad affli:shon to the gud lady to
 " find that she shud behave so badly while under her
 " care and as this wud be a consarn that cud do her no
 " gud it wud be better not to let her no it i have won
 " more thing to ad and that is that howiuar gilty you
 " find her you wud trete her gently this my affekshon
 " for her makes me beg of you remember she is your
 " child so concluds

" *Your and felisias*

" *sincere tho unnown friend.*

" P. S. the yung mans father is a dounrite lybertin
 " and not wurth a graut.

I am sure, Madam, your generous concern for my happiness makes you now feel much the same risings of indignation at reading the vile insinuations of this ridiculous letter that I did, and therefore I need not particularly describe the various pangs of working antipathy it occasioned in my bosom. What gross, what infamous reflections! but a heart, filled with conscious innocence

innocence, is the best support against slander. What little reason have we to boast of the superior advantages of education, when persons of the meanest attainments can destroy our peace, and make such bitter inroads on our happiness! The stupidity and ill-spelling of the letter, I was sensible, could not give my father the least reason to suspect the sincerity of the writer, since a person of the meanest sense and most illiberal education, is equally as good a judge of facts as those who are possessed of the most amiable accomplishments. And indeed, so far from this being an objection; it must appear to him as a circumstance that confirmed the hateful insinuations it contained, since he would naturally suppose, that a person who appeared so much beneath me, could have no very particular acquaintance with me, and consequently could have no interest in view in attempting to deceive him. These were some of the first reflections I made on this part of my misfortunes. But who is the writer? said I to myself; this I am particularly interested to know, since it is of the greatest importance towards clearing my injured innocence, and regaining my father's esteem. At this I fixed my eyes again upon the letter, and fancied it was a woman's hand, while the false orthography convinced me that my conjecture was well founded. But then who had I offended? There are none, said I, that I have seen here that I dare fix such a base suspicion upon; besides, could malice alone seek to ruin me without some deep laid scheme of rankling selfishness? But whose happiness do I oppose? I know nobody to whose felicity I would not contribute. What must I think? How can I clear myself, without being able to find out the wicked author of this heavy misfortune?

Thus, Madam, I reasoned then, and thus I reason still, while every reflection, instead of giving me the least light in this dark affair, wraps it in a still deeper obscurity. But alas! had the whole been as great a falsehood as that part which charges the virtuous Lucius and me with guilt, I should have less to fear. My aunt is ignorant of our tender passion; I have seen him without her knowledge; encouraged his addresses without

my

my father's permission ; and still love that worthy son of an unworthy father ; the amiable son of an abandoned libertine. How can I confess this without making him suspect that the person to whom he owes this information, is too well acquainted with my weakness to be mistaken in the least particular. The truth of one circumstance will give credit to the rest, and give all too great an air of truth, while my father's opinion that Lucius is the author of my ruin, will root so deep a prejudice against him, that he will be deaf to all that can be said in his favour, and hardly ever be brought to hear him vindicated with patience.

All these reflections passed thro' my mind with the utmost precipitation ; for, impatient to find something to fix upon, that might lead me out of this labyrinth, and teach me how to calm my father's anger, I in an instant collected every scattered thought, and sought all around me for some pleasing friendly hope on which I might support my spirits, ready to sink under my father's displeasure : but my soul could glance its eye upon no comfort except my innocence ; and as often as that occurred to my mind, there beamed through it a ray of peace, which preserved me from sinking under this heavy load of difficulties. Amidst these various agitations, my thoughts frequently returned to my father, to the almost infinite instances I have received of his goodness. Intendering thoughts ! delightful ideas ! though now attended with bitterness.——A soothing bitterness that melted my soul, and filled my eyes again with fresh, flowing tears. But here again my innocence, sweetest comfort of the distress ! returned again, and made me reflect that I was still as worthy of his indulgent regards as ever. Happy, delightful thought ! O virtue ! thou noblest source of fortitude, thou sweetest support of the human mind, how unspeakable is thy value, and how much more than wretched is the mind that wants thy aids !

Employed in this manner, I spent a considerable time alone in the parlour, expecting every moment my father's return ; for which, however, I was not yet prepared ; when at last a servant came to tell me that dinner was upon the table. I had hitherto been too deeply

ly engaged to think of dining, and was therefore unprovided with an excuse to prevent it, tho' in the situation I was in, it was natural to feel a great deal of reluctance against sitting at the same table with my father; and besides, the emotions I had suffered had entirely taken away my appetite. My mind, yet too disturbed for company, made me look upon solitude as a relief; I therefore sent word that I was indisposed, and desired to be excused; but the next moment, considering that it would appear very singular to the family, and perhaps set the servants upon searching for the reason of my behaviour, if I alone should be absent from the table at my father's coming; and that nothing could appear to them sufficient to excuse my refusal, I hastily wiped my eyes, and, arming myself with all the courage I could collect, made haste into the dining-room, in order to overtake the servant before he had delivered the message.

I took my seat with the rest, with an air as calm as possible, tho' it is not to be supposed that my countenance could be entirely divested of every trace of uneasiness. My father had his eyes continually fixed upon me, with an earnestness that alternately expressed his anger and pity, while I endeavoured to support his looks with an easy humble confidence. My aunt and Amelia regarded us both with a silent kind of admiration; and, I dare say, there never was an elegant entertainment passed over with fewer words. As soon as the desert was taken away, I drank my duty to my father: this was the first syllable that I had spoken; and though I had not eaten a mouthful, neither my aunt nor cousin had pressed me to it. They saw my disorder, and did not question my having cause for uneasiness, since my father appeared not more at ease than I. I drank, I say, my duty to my father; but my heart was too full to suffer me to speak it plainly; these words trembled on my quivering lips; for my heart so strongly felt the force of duty, that it would speak it too: it struggled to speak it, my softness would not be restrained, a gush of filial piety startled in my eyes, and the moment I lifted up my hand, hardly knowing what I did, the tears started and fell into the glass. I then set

it down untouched, and looking at my aunt, while the rising swell again almost intercepted my sight, You wonder, Madam, cried I, at the manner in which I welcome my father——Here she interrupted me, by ordering the servant that was in waiting to retire; and he being gone, I continued; And is it not a thing to be wondered at? I have not seen my father before these six months——that dear father, whose tenderness for me has been too great to be expressed: but alas! his mind is tainted with the foulest suspicions. O help me to vindicate my honour, and to find out the monstrous author of those infamous lies! I am sure he will be glad to find me innocent!——I know he will!

Here I threw the letter upon the table, and, unable to contain any longer the impetuous glut of sorrow that now arose too high to be concealed, I drew out my handkerchief, and, hanging down my head, gave free scope to my tears; my grief would not now admit of restraint, I therefore neither stifled my sighs nor groans; I sobbed aloud, and every one in the company bore a part in this melancholly entertainment; they all sympathized with me, and wept without reserve; even my father could not help joining with the rest; I lifted up my eyes, swimming in tears, and saw some big drops roll down his awful face, when arising hastily, as if he feared being softened too much to be able to retain his rigour, or dreading that he should lose his judgment in his affection, went out of the room, with a countenance that expressed more tenderness than austerity.

As soon as he was gone, my aunt, taking me by the hand, and laying down the letter; I have been much surprized, said she, wiping her eyes, at my brother's behaviour, and have in vain endeavoured to find out the cause of it. He would give me no reason for treating you as he has done; but you have discovered the mystery. He has been informed of your passion for Lucius: and don't you really love him? I have for some time suspected it. Come, my dear, be sincere; there is no crime in loving a man of his character. You need not tell me that you are innocent of what is here laid to your charge.——I am satisfied that you are so, and have

have too good an opinion of you both, to entertain the least suspicion injurious to his honour or yours. You are both virtuous, and both worthy of my brother's esteem. Ah! Madam, cried I, with a resolution inspired by my grief, will you forgive my injuring your goodness by concealing it from you? This is kind indeed. I do love him——tenderly love him——love him even more than myself;——but indeed, Madam, our mutual passion has been always regulated by the strictest virtue;——it is an innocent passion, and, I assure you, that he loves me too well to propose any step that would disoblige my father; nor would he, great as his love is, accept of my hand without his consent, who alone has a right to dispose of me. This I know to be true; he has told me so himself, while I have rejoiced in his virtue, and considered it as a most convincing instance of the purity and sublimity of his soul.

I don't question it, my dear, returned she, pressing my hand, but who is the author of this malicious letter? I should be glad to be informed of that; but Lucius may possibly be able to give us some light; I will write to him to-night, and inclose this in it; meanwhile I will take upon me to clear up your virtue, and to give my brother better sentiments of this amiable young man.——But it is fit he should appear himself; let him be his own advocate, he will plead the cause of his own heart with prevailing eloquence. Dear Madam, cried I, embracing her, is it possible that you can be so very good? Do you indeed think we shall be able to remove the invidious impressions that have been made upon my father's mind? O how happy shall I think myself if I can but regain his affection; for the uneasiness he suffers on my account is more painful to me than all the effects of his displeasure. My aunt embraced me in her turn, and endeavoured to recover my spirits by her caresses. And in short, having called for a pen and ink, wrote in the following terms to my dear Lucius.

“ S I R,

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 119

"SIR,

"BY my brother's arrival this morning, I find that you and Felicia have been much injured; but to remove the pain this news may give you, I here offer my best endeavours to undeceive him; nor shall my utmost efforts be wanting to do you justice, by convincing him that you have a mind that scorns to be guilty of what is laid to your charge in the inclosed libel. Let it be your care to find out the wicked author, and let us see you as soon as possible.

"Your's &c.

This note, I say, was wrote in the wrapper, sealed up, and sent away by a servant, who had orders to deliver it into his own hand. You see now, Madam, the situation of my affairs; I am upon a crisis which must determine my future happiness or misery. It is true, the satisfaction I have received from my aunt's goodness is too great to be expressed; she has given me hopes which counter-balance my fears: and in the midst of all my uneasiness, my gratitude and affection for her has some charms, some engaging sweets, which will make themselves felt. But yet, while my father is so offended, I must have a claim to your pity; and therefore, with the greatest propriety, subscribe myself,

Your Ladyship's

Most unhappy friend

FELICIA.

L E T T E R ^I XIX.

BY the last post, Madam, I gave you an account of my father's arrival, and of the dreadful turn his presence made in my affairs; and I imagine that, filled with a friendly impatience, you long to hear whether I have yet so far vindicated my honour as to recover his esteem, or whether I am still oppressed with the same uneasiness I then laboured under; I will therefore make haste to gratify your curiosity, and repeat my letters,

letters, without waiting the return of the post for an answer; but, did you but know how much I need your advice and consolation, you would be as expeditious in writing as I am.

My dear afflicted father, I told you, unable to withstand his natural affection, and resolved to be guided only by the cool dictates of his judgment, was constrained, in order to keep a mastery over his passions, to retire for some time to collect his spirits; while I took advantage of his absence to write you my last melancholly epistle, which took me up the whole afternoon; having transcribed the ridiculous letter I sent you a copy of, while my aunt was writing to Lucius.

In the evening, this good lady had the precaution to order the servants not to enter the room, lest they should be a witness of any expressions, that might shock my delicacy for them to hear. A behaviour that shewed at once her prudence and regard for my reputation. Even at supper, a dumb waiter supplied the place of an attendant, so that we were entirely at liberty to enter, without restraint, upon the injustice of my father's suspicions; nor could my aunt let slip this first opportunity of assuring him, that, notwithstanding the malicious letter which had given him so much uneasiness, she still retained the highest opinion of my virtue and discretion. But to clear Felicia's innocence, said she, it is necessary that we should try to find out the wicked writer; but as this will probably require time, you must endeavour meanwhile to divest yourself of prejudices, which may prevent your discovering the truth. It is not whether my niece has placed her affections upon a person of a fortune something inferior to her's, that we are now to enquire after, but whether it is upon an unworthy object; whether she has violated her regard for virtue; behaved, in any instance, inconsistent with a decent modesty; or had any thoughts of disposing of herself without your consent? In short, it is your Felicia's honour and duty we are to vindicate; and I don't doubt but we shall be able to do it, to the satisfaction of any disinterested person. What then, returned he, would you insinuate that there is no crime in placing her affection upon a man beneath her? —

a very pretty story truly! If she has no more regard for my authority than privately to favour the addressee of a worthless fellow, what ought I to think of her? Is this any instance either of her duty or modesty?—— No, no, I am not fit to be consulted—— the old fool her father would be too scrupulous; he would perhaps consult his daughter's honour to the prejudice of her inclinations; and it would be time enough to seek his consent, when it will be of no service to him to refuse it. Severe as these words were, the manner of his uttering them added a double sharpness: they touched me in a tender part, and penetrated my very soul. What could I do then but burst into tears—— into bitter tears, that arose from an agony too painful to be endured. These were all the answer that I could make him; only, as I arose to go to bed, I sobbed out, Indeed, Sir, your suspicions go to my very heart; but it is my satisfaction that I don't deserve them. Indeed I have never injured you, even in thought.

You will readily believe that I was now too much indisposed to taste the refreshing sweets of sleep. I was no sooner laid down than I began to give way to a whole croud of painful reflections. I considered myself as the most unhappy creature upon earth; and as worthy of the pity of the meanest peasant. My father, said I to myself, looks upon me with shame! my dear, my tender father hardens his heart against me! I have lost his esteem—— lost his affection.—— Had I sacrificed my passion for Lucius to him, I might have made a merit of my obedience, and the pleasure he would have received from the reflection of my duty, would have been some recompence for the violence I should have done myself. But I have now lost both my father and my lover. What a shock to nature! what a violence to love! like a wretch the most desolate and forlorn, I find myself deprived of every comfort—— of every comfort except my innocence—— What a group of miseries has this day produced! when filled with joy at my father's presence, while nature, struggling in my bosom, made me fly to his arms, longing to embrace him, and eager to welcome him upon his arrival, to turn away from me with disdain, to treat me as

a guilty criminal, as the disgrace of his family! Oh my heart! how have I been able to sustain the shock! what would I not give to find out the author of all my troubles? Oh! my dear Lucius! didst thou but know the agony, the distraction of my soul at this moment, how nearly would thy despair resemble mine! alas! — thou wilt know it too soon — I shall never be thine! I must bid adieu to all my pleasing prospects of happiness; they are vanished, and I shall be miserable! — O my God! pity my distress, and vindicate the cause of my injured innocence! Thou art still my friend; and to thee I can appeal as a witness of the purity of my passion, of the sincerity of my duty, and the integrity of my heart — I must, I will confide in thy goodness —

In reflections like these I spent the greatest part of the night, while sleep seemed to fly from my heavy eyelids, parched up and drained of every tear; nor was it till my usual time of rising, that, composed a little by some pious thoughts, I fell into a slumber, in which I continued till noon. I then arose, extremely indisposed with a violent pain in my head; when Amelia, thinking the air, which then blowed with a pleasing freshness, might give me some relief, engaged me to take a turn in the fields. But I shall omit the conversation which passed between us, which indeed was as gloomy as possible. The thoughts of her own happiness, so sincere is her affection, could not prevent her bearing an engaging part in my afflictions; and though the day is fixed for her union with Mellifont, she seemed to sympathise in my griefs with as real sorrow as if her heart likewise was devoid of all joy.

Upon my return, I found myself much more disordered than when I went out, and therefore, by my aunt's advice, had a light dinner provided for me, and brought into my chamber; where I dined with Amelia, and that being over, was persuaded to try if sleep would give me any relief; and indeed, after an hour's repose, round the pain in my head much abated. I then went down stairs, and enquiring for my aunt, was told that she was in the parlour with my father and Prudilla, who had just come to pay us a visit. I hesitated at first to consider

consider whether I should join them or not; but considering that to avoid my father's presence would only encrease his opinion of my guilt, I resolved, in spite of my reluctance, to bear a part in the conversation, or at least to make one of the company.

As soon as I entered the parlour, I could not help taking notice of Prudilla's extraordinary complaisance, which was the more remarkable, as she had lately treated me, whenever I chanced to see her, with a reserved coldness, that made me fancy I had offended her; but now she oppressed me with her caresses, and seemed to strive to outdo herself by the excess of her complaisance. My dear, said she, after enquiring my health, I am extremely sorry to see you so much out of order. Really you are more indisposed than you are willing to think yourself. I am afraid our country air don't agree with you. Don't you think so too my dear? I think you feel a little feverish; God forbid a relapse! You are not yet recovered of a fever that had like to have proved mortal. I thank you, Madam, for your concern for my health, returned I, but indeed I have no apprehensions of that kind. Mine is only a slight indisposition. A pain in my head and lowness of spirits, which, I hope, will soon be removed: I am pretty subject to these disorders. You have, I think, a very delicate constitution, she replied; but even that is a great mercy, when it has such a happy effect as I observe it to have in you. For a person so young to have a mind fixed upon a better world! to give such early proofs of your being one of the elect!——Really, Sir, continued she, you are a very happy man in being blessed with a daughter who has so much grace and piety. Every body here are charmed with her behaviour, and I don't think there is a person living that can give her an ill word.

My father here shook his head, and gave a sigh, and at the same time smiled with an air that seemed to thank her for her good opinion of me. My aunt smiled too, but with this difference, that her looks did not express the least degree of gratitude; for the smile which in my father's countenance discovered a secret pleasure, impressed only upon her's a satyrical cast. She knew

Prudilla; my father was entirely ignorant of her character; and tho' she could not, as she afterwards told me, dive into her motive for giving me such a devout pænegyric, yet she could not help thinking there must be something at the bottom of this that she ought to discover. She shrugged up her shoulders with an air of distrust, her eyes ran over each of our faces, as if she sought to know, by the traces she found there, whether our thoughts were conformable to her own. Meanwhile Amelia, who sat next me, jogged me with her elbow, and looking in my face, bit her lips, and seemed to say. Observe—what egregious flattery!

I am glad, said my father, after a moment's hesitation, to hear so good an account of my daughter; but the opinions of our friends are not always the most just; they are blind to our foibles, and those few perfections we have, they are so complaisant as to magnify much above the truth. But did you never, Madam, continued he, hear the least reflection upon Felicia's character? No, Sir, upon my word, not a syllable, I assure you, said she, with the utmost earnestness; there is not a person living that can give her an ill word. She is so much beloved, that if the consideration of her health, or any other reason, should engage you to take her with you to town, every body that knows her would be extremely afflicted. But if her health makes it necessary, it would be an injury to her to desire her stay; however, we should be sorry to lose her agreeable, edifying company. I don't doubt it, returned my aunt, but do you talk of removing her from the fragrant breezes of the country to the smoak of London, for the sake of her health? The doctors are here all against you; in my opinion, Felicia is much better where she is. Nay, rejoined my father, I have no objection to the place. This house stands in a very delightful situation; and the bloom upon Amelia's countenance is to me a sufficient proof of the purity of the air. I shall not dispute that point with you, returned Prudilla, all constitutions, you know, are not alike, and for my part, I am so far convinced that London would agree better with Felicia, that I could consent to lose her company for the advantage she would receive from

from it, in recovering a more perfect state of health. Don't you think, Felicia, said she, in a fawning tone, I should make a considerable sacrifice in foregoing the pleasure of your conversation, purely for your advantage? But my good friends here don't seem to be of my opinion; what do you think of it? you are the best judge; were you not stronger, more brisk and lively when you lived in town than you have been since? I think I heard you say you were. No, Madam, I never said any such thing, replied I, in a peevish tone, (surprized at what could be the reason of her desiring my return to London) Did not you? I really thought you did, returned she again, I am glad to find I was mistaken; for indeed I desire nothing more than to be blest with the continuance of your improving conversation. I was saying t'other day, to a certain lady of my acquaintance, that it would be a great misfortune to us all to lose you; for positively, said I, a young lady of such a holy and virtuous life is very hard to be met with. She was of my opinion, and tho' I don't love to praise people to their faces, I can't help saying that we talked I don't know how long on your piety.

But I weary both you, Madam, and myself, with relating tattle of no consequence. Hitherto every thing went on smoothly. Prudilla had attempted to persuade my father to take me with him to town; but for what reason I could not then imagine; her arguments, however, proved unsuccessful; when seeing me discover some marks of uneasiness, she tried again to cajole me with the most ridiculous kind of flattery, which was the less insupportable, as it employed my father's thoughts, and prevented him from entering upon a more painful subject. All this while every thing had the air of mystery; but her dark designs were soon to be laid open, when the very praises she so liberally bestowed upon me were to turn to her own confusion. I should have told you that the servant I mentioned in my last to have been sent to Lucius, with orders to deliver the letter, which has been the cause of all my sufferings, into his own hand, returned without an answer, he not being at home; he was therefore sent again yesterday at noon.

and returning about three hours after, my aunt was called out to speak to him, just at the time when Prudilla was in the midst of her devoutly fustian panegyrics, in which I let her proceed without interruption. My aunt's stay was very short, for she returned in a few minutes after she left us, with a countenance inflamed with anger, her eyes sparkled with resentment, and every gesture expressed a rage too violent to be restrained; when sitting down for a few minutes to recover herself, she perused a letter she had in her hand, while we all kept silence, and, big with expectation, seemed to wait for the discovery of some important secret. For my part, I knew not what to think; I was unacquainted with the servant's being sent this last time to Lucius, for he was dispatched to him while I was in my chamber. It is true, as I had nothing to reproach myself with, I had no reason to fear my aunt's reproaches; but yet, as I had already been greatly injured, I could not help dreading some further practices against me; I therefore observed her behaviour, in order to anticipate a discovery, in which I did not doubt my being concerned; but I had not watched her a minute before I guessed the whole, and thought myself able to discover the cause of those strong emotions which agitated her generous soul. She frowned, she bit her lips, she cast a scornful glance at Prudilla, that expressed both her anger and surprize; and then, with a look of disgust, continued reading for half a minute longer, when, as if unable to proceed, she repeated the same marks of aversion and astonishment: At last, laying the letter upon the table, and looking at Prudilla, Did you ever hear, Madam, said she, the least reflection upon Felicia's character? Did you ever hear her virtue, her prudence, or her reputation called in question? N—o, n—o, Madam. returned she, with some confusion; at the same time changing colour, while my aunt, riveting her eyes to her's, seemed to increase her disorder; but why do you ask me that question again? added she, with a hesitation that shewed she was greatly alarmed; you don't suspect me of—of—injuring her so much as to say the contrary? You then sincerely believe her to be perfectly virtuous,

resumed

resumed my aunt? Yes, Madam, indeed I do, said she, upon my word I do; as virtuous as myself. Here her face, which a moment before was covered with a livid paleness, was now all of a flame. Yes, and a great deal more so, Madam, replied my aunt, or I am much mistaken.—What do you mean, Madam? cried Prudilla, rising, and casting a glance at the door; have you a mind to affront me? A great deal more so! I protest I don't understand you.—A great deal more so! —A great deal more virtuous than I am! —Is this the manner in which you treat your friends?—somebody has told you that I have writ—they have told you that—a—I have said something to Miss Felicia's prejudice, and you are unwise enough to believe them; but it is a lie, Madam, continued she, raising her voice, an arrant lie, as great a falsehood as ever was invented. I thought, Madam, you had too good an opinion of me to suspect my being guilty of such a thing. But, ladies, your servant—your servant, Sir. I shall know how to resent this treatment! ha! mighty pretty! more virtuous than I!

Here she flew to the door in a violent rage, possibly to avoid any farther explanations, while Amelia jogged me with her elbow, and whispered, Did you observe the word *writ*? she had like to have confessed all at once; she knows the contents of the letter, and that there is no name subscribed, as well as if she had read it this moment. O guilt, continued she, shaking her head, what a fool dost thou make of us! In reply, I only smiled, and shook my head too.—In the mean time, Prudilla was pulling the lock, while she found all her endeavours to open the door prove fruitless; for my aunt, in coming in, foreseeing that it would be difficult to detain her long enough to convince my father of her guilt, had wisely turned the key, and put it in her pocket.

Prudilla was now enraged almost to a degree of madness, and turning about, called out aloud, Open the door, Madam. By what authority do you pretend to detain me here? Open the door, I say, or I'll break it open. She here thundered at it with her feet, while

my aunt, smiling, cried, in a soft tone, Come, come, Madam, softly——softly——pray don't expose yourself to the derision of my servants. Pray, Madam, be advised; this passion don't become you——indeed it does not; it would almost make one suspect you of something very bad. Dear Madam, be so good as to sit down; you must not leave us so soon, upon my word we can't part with you yet. My father all this while seemed filled with the greatest astonishment; he appeared neither to know how to act, or what to say; however, reflecting at last, perhaps, that my aunt must have some extraordinary reason for this change of behaviour to a person whom, a quarter of an hour before, she treated with much politeness, he arose, and taking Prudilla by the hand, led her to her chair, at the same time entreating her to compose herself. When seeing it was to no purpose to make any further resistance, she peaceably resumed her seat, and fixing her eyes upon the floor, waited with the utmost uneasiness for what my aunt had farther to add. Her looks were now dejected and melancholly, and it was easy to see the reluctance she felt at being obliged, in spite of herself, to hear the mortifying things she had reason to expect.

What is the matter? cried my aunt, seeing her seated, you appear strangely discomposed; but, however, I must have some farther discourse with you. You have been saying abundance of agreeable things of my dear niece, for which she is undoubtedly extremely obliged to you; but is she really so virtuous, pious and discreet as you have represented her? Pray tell us all you know of her, (and then putting on her spectacles, and taking the letter to my father out of her pocket, she proceeded in a slow reading tone) and don't shew such a *vast deal of reluctance at communicating the secret intrigues of Miss Felicia*. I don't know what you mean, Madam, replied she. You treat me very unworthily; very unlike a gentlewoman. Why, is not this letter your's? returned my aunt. No, Madam, she replied; how should it be mine? I scorn to use any body ill, much less Felicia. It was barbarous to suspect me of a crime of this nature; but we are all liable to be slandered.

Felicia,

Felicia, added she, wiping her eyes, why don't you take my part? I have often vindicated you on the like occasion. I could not bear to hear any body use you ill; it is cruel then in you to hear me treated so monstrously on your account. I humbly thank you, Madam, returned I, tho' I cannot see that you could be put to much pains in vindicating my reputation, when you have never heard, as you say, the least ill word of me. This produced a general smile; only Amelia, delighted with the thought of speedily seeing my innocence cleared up, in the presence of my father, could not forbear indulging the ill-natured pleasure of increasing Prudilla's confusion, by a triumphant laugh. When my aunt resumed, with that superiority in her air which conscious virtue gives us over the meanness of detected guilt, Come, come, Madam, these subtrefuges and low evasions serve only to set your crimes in a more glaring light: Nor do I expect to hear any thing else but such absurd contradictions, while you endeavour to clear yourself of those base and scandalous actions, which it is in my power to prove against you. This letter, this vile, this infamous and malicious letter, which equally shews the abandoned character and ignorance of the writer, is your's; I know it is;—nor will any thing you can say persuade me to believe the contrary.—It is your hand—and it exactly agrees with another I have here, that discovers the motive of your actions, and lays open and naked the wickedness and deformity of your corrupted soul. Is it for this you affect to appear virtuous, to practise the blackest vices with a better grace? To give an innocent mind all the distress, and shame, and sorrow, which only a guilty one, like your's, ought to suffer? To estrange the affections of an indulgent parent from an only child, the delight of his life, the object of his dearest hopes and fondest wishes? To throw a damp over all his prospects of joy, by representing her as guilty, as a disgrace and reproach to his name, whom he has justly admired and loved for her virtues. Blush, Madam, if you have any sense of shame, or the least degree of that extraordinary modesty to which you make such mighty pretences; blush, and look into yourself with horror.

O my stars! for one of your years to attempt to delude a young man—a very young man—and to attempt to frighten him to a compliance with your leud desires, by threatening to deprive him of his mistress! What impudence!—And to dare to attempt it too!—to attempt it by such base methods!—But to finish your shame, and convince my brother that what I have said is but too true, I'll read this vile letter.

Here, putting on her spectacles, she began, in the slow tone of a person reading a hand almost unintelligible,

“Unkind Lucius,

“If I desired to meet you in the dark last night, it was only to save my blushes—[How modest this was! interrupted Amelia, while my aunt proceeded]—come to-night and I'll refuse you nothing——

Prudilla had sat all this while in a stupid kind of amazement, with a countenance on which was painted all the horror and rage, and mortified dejection that guilt and unmasked hypocrisy could give it. Her mouth was open, every feature distorted, and her whole frame trembling and convulsed. She continued unable to speak, unable to interrupt what gave her such pain to hear. But now a sudden impulse of shame made her start from her seat, and snatching part of the letter out of my aunt's hand, in a violent passion, tore it to pieces, crying, this is too much, Madam, nobody could bear it:—It is a forgery—a cursed forgery. While my aunt, smiling with an air of contempt, cast her eyes upon a small piece she held fast in her fingers, which presenting to my father, he read the following words, which I have now before me:

use my request or tell
w to be reveng'd on your
acquaint her father with
Your blushin

You are ready now, Madam, to wonder how I could think of giving you this unintelligible fragment, under which was remaining the three first letters of her name, for I can't now be supposed to be in a disposition to puzzle

puzzle you with riddles; but however insignificant it may appear, it not only served to convince my father, that the hand was exactly the same as that in which the letter was written, that had given us so much uneasiness, but assisted my aunt in recollecting the whole lines, of which these were a part, which she might easily do, as it was hardly half an hour since she had read the letter entire; and then, indeed, they appeared of the greatest consequence, since they explained the motive of this dark proceeding.

My father, having compared this piece with the letter on the table, returned it to my aunt, who, looking at it with attention, after a moment's consideration, told us, she remembered the lines ran thus:

"But if you refuse my fond request, or tell any body what you know I would have a secret, I know how to be revenged on your idol, that you doat so much upon, and will positively acquaint her father with every thing you would hide from him. Your blushing, &c."

These, I assure you, continued my aunt, were exactly her words. O monstrous! cried Prudilla, throwing away the paper, which she had tore into small pieces, monstrous indeed! what vile insinuations! that I should be suspected of such crimes! but my piety and modesty are too well known for any body to believe it. I charged with thinking of a fellow! an odious, nasty fellow! But I'll still be revenged: I will make him smart for it. I—that never had an indecent thought in my life! I think of a filthy fellow! No, no, Madam, my reputation for chastity is too well established for any body to imagine it. It is a lie; and, for what I know, you, Madam, may have a hand in it: but I can see through your plots. This, Sir, is a contrivance between Lucius and your wicked daughter, whom I never suspected till this moment; they would be revenged, because I was enough your friend to oppose her marrying such a villain, such a debauched, lewd villain. And so having my letter there, they must needs counterfeit my hand. Here she forced a ridiculous, affected laugh, and then proceeded, La! Miss, I did not think

think you had been so cunning. But you shall know that my character is above censure.

It would be impossible, Madam, to describe all the strange contortions, the convulsive gestures and affected airs with which this speech was uttered. She had at first the very look of a fury; she stared, she stamped and walked about the room, fluttering her fan, while her countenance, as well as every action, expressed the swell of rage, and all the mortifying pangs that could rack a corrupted heart, ashamed of being discovered, too proud ingenuously to confess its guilt, and too much heated by passion to attend the little decorums of her character. But at last, thinking, in the heat of her rage, she might throw all upon Lucius and me, and perhaps persuade my father, at least, that she was ignorant of those crimes which touched her most to the quick, she changed her part, and swallowed up by the thoughts of revenge, forgot that by this contradictory behaviour she took the most effectual way of destroying at once her character, and discovering the deformity of her black, abandoned soul. But she was incapable of reflection, and hurried away by a torrent of passion, caught at the first relief that offered; a relief that made her forget her shame, and feel a shadowy dawn of triumph. Good God! can there be worse miseries than those which arise from guilt? What destruction does it occasion, while its very reliefs plunge us into more aggravated wretchedness, into deeper horrors!

My father, now unable to contain his indignation, arose, and, damping the triumphant smile which just began to quiver on her countenance, by a stern and contemptuous glance, Madam, cried he, don't think it in your power to impose upon me by these low artifices; I can see through all these doubling, the weak subterfuges of an abandoned mind. If my daughter has no crimes but what such a vile hypocrite as you can reproach her with, I shall do her the justice to think her innocent.

What a beam of joy, at these words, shot through my soul! My aunt now arose, and, opening the door, cried, Begone, Madam, for your brother's sake I shall be more tender of your reputation than you deserve,
but

but never presume again to enter into my house. Go, and blush in secret.—I am sorry that ever I knew you. Here Prudilla left us, hanging down her head, and muttering something we could not perfectly understand. —

But I find I must break off. When I began this letter, I fancied it would be very short; but I am got, before I am aware, to my usual length. Sure I must be an extravagant lover of writing, to send you such long epistles: the post is ready to set out, and I have but just time to repeat my assurances that I am, and shall ever be,

Your LADYSHIP'S
Most affectionate Friend,
FELICIA.

L E T T E R XX.

AS soon, Madam, as Prudilla was gone, elated with the thoughts of what had pass'd, and charmed with the delightful prospect of a speedy reconciliation with my father, I was going to embrace this favourable moment of throwing myself at his feet, and begging to be restored to his esteem; but I no sooner rose up in order to make these submissions, than, stopped by the pride of virtue, I reflected that I had already made too many attempts to soften his unjust anger; and that if he was now convinced of my innocence, it did not become me to entreat, for what I had a right to demand from him. Shall I, like a criminal, said I to myself, supplicate for forgiveness? — In what have I offended? — It is for guilt to stoop so low, innocence has no need of stooping. At this thought I sat down again, and my father and my aunt still warm with resentment, being now seated too, could not help making some reflections on the odious deformity of Prudilla's mind.

What an abandoned hypocrite! cried my father, with a look still disturbed by passion, what a vile incendiary! but how ridiculously inconsistent was her conduct! I confess I am not able to think it, in any instance, agreeable

agreeable to common sense ; nor can I determine which is the most remarkable, her folly, or her wickedness. What a heap of contradictions ! of absurd palpable contradictions ! Really, Sir, replied my aunt, I can't think her so inconsistent with herself as you do ; her artifices appear to me all of a piece. 'Thinking Felicia an obstacle to her criminal desires, she endeavours to prevail with you to send for her up to town ; you unexpectedly come to search into the truth of what she had alledged against your daughter ; when dreading a discovery that might prove fatal to her reputation, she comes hoping to clear herself of suspicion by contradicting every thing she said in the letter, and at the same time colouring over her artifices by the grossest flattery, endeavours to persuade us, that our air don't agree with her constitution ; and thus, by a concern for her health, and an affectation of the strictest friendship, she flattered herself with carrying on her grand design, which is still the removal of your daughter. And, as to the rest of her conduct, continued my aunt, it is easily accounted for, from the strong perturbations of a guilty mind, terrified at the thoughts of a discovery, and therefore in too great a ferment to attend to the nice decorums which were necessary to carry on such a difficult design, and too much perplexed to secure herself by the subtle aids of a ready imagination. She affects to appear a lady of the strictest piety, and most unblemished sanctity of life ; she is the censor of the neighbourhood ; and not the smallest fault can escape her notice ; judge then, how hard it must be to carry on this disguise, when so closely attacked, and how terrible the apprehension of being seen in her true deformity.

Right, right, cried my father, she is more subtle than I imagined, at least I ought to think so, added he, in a tender tone, in vindication of my too easy credulity. — I have injured my Felicia ! — I could hear no more — I flew into his arms, while he, seeing my intention, arose and stepped forwards to receive me. What a delightful, painful moment !

O my dear friend, you can't conceive even a distant idea of half the satisfaction and joy I felt at this instant. Something like the voice of nature hush'd my troubled
soul

soul into a peaceful transport, into a rapture less tumultuous, though not less pleasing than that of two meeting lovers. My life seemed to run up to its source, and to return back again in a sweeter and more tranquil stream. I embraced my father as if I had not seen him till that moment, as if that was the happy instant of his arrival. Every care, every trouble was then forgot; my present joy took up all my thoughts, and all those thoughts were extasy. My father, having tenderly embraced me, with the affection of a parent who had found a child more than doubly lost, while nature rising in his eyes, swelled into a tear, and rolled down his awful cheeks, seated me in a chair that was next to his own, and taking hold of my hand, My dear Felicia, said he, while all the parent gushed in his eyes, I have dearly suffered in too easily believing thee guilty; but can't thou forgive the disquiet I have given thee, and overlook this weak credulity that—Dear, Sir, cried I, interrupting him, unable to hold out any longer, and almost ashamed of his condescension, I can't bear to hear you. Is this the language of a father to a daughter? No, Sir, it shall never be yours to me; you oppress me too much by this unmerited goodness. The terrible disquiets we have both felt, must be placed to Prudilla's account. But I heartily forgive her; she has been sufficiently mortified: we will think of her then no more. My conduct, my resignation to your will, shall sufficiently shew how little I deserve her slanders. You shall know me to be dutiful; I will obey you in every thing you can desire.

Here he pressed my hand, and after a short silence, turning to my aunt, asked who the person was, on whom I had placed my affections. He is, said she (for here, Madam, I can't help repeating her words, she talked so charmingly) he is a young gentleman, of a family not inferior to ours; but this is a trifling circumstance, when compared with his personal virtues. He has a noble dignity of sentiment, a generous and humane heart, a delicacy of soul that renders him equally beloved and admired. This, Sir, is the character I give of him; and I don't question, Sir, but you'll find it strictly just. If you enquire abroad, you will hear

hear too of temperance, affability, an engaging temper, and, in short, of all the virtues you would wish to see in a son-in-law. I am sorry to hear it, returned my father; it will be so much the harder for my daughter to comply with what I have to propose to her. I have engaged my word to solicit her consent to marry the son of one of my most intimate friends; and have assured him, that she pays so strict an obedience to my will, that he need not doubt of my success. He has a fortune superior to hers, a circumstance that I cannot overlook, nor does he want any qualification to entitle him to the character of a worthy man, or a gentleman. Let me see now, Felicia, added he, addressing himself to me, that you can obey my inclinations rather than your own; for I will not do you the injury to imagine, that you have so far engaged yourself without my consent, as to be unable to go back. Sir, replied I, with my eyes fixed on the floor, I am all obedience. I never proposed to marry without your approbation; but let me at least beg, that I might have time to conquer my heart, and subdue my rebellious inclinations. I will study to obey you, and do all in my power to render myself worthy your esteem. This, my dear, returned he, is all I desire. It would indeed be a shock to decency and virtue, as well as the greatest injury to the man thou wouldst endeavour to render happy, wert thou forced into his arms, while thy tenderest affections were placed upon another. But time, and the perfections of the gentleman I have chose for thee, will, I hope, make that desirable change, which will be necessary to compleat the felicity of you both.

Could our happy reconciliation be concluded with a subject more capable of giving a damp to my rising joys, and to the exquisite satisfaction of filial affection? my heart though dissolved in duty, felt the whole force of this last demand, and at the same instant that I gave up all power over myself, and consented to forsake my dear Lucius, he appeared present to my mind, in all his charms, in all the radiant charms of virtue, yet drooping under his unhappy lot, while the tender languishment of his soul seemed to reproach my too easy compliance. But what could I do? could I refuse any thing

thing to a father, who had a right to demand every thing from me? No, that was impossible, I was then in a disposition to pay him the most rigorous obedience. Nor indeed could he have made any request that would have given me equal pain to grant: for wealth and splendour, and all the alluring gaieties of life appear but trifles, when compared with the more important interests of our hearts. Love, in the very instant when I endeavoured to give up the lost, the tender passion, resumed its empire, and, in spite of all my resolution, flow'd in upon my soul, and embittered the generous efforts of my duty; nor could I thus formally resign the extatic thought of spending my life with Lucius, without feeling some of the most cruel pangs. However, endeavouring to collect myself as much as possible, by recalling the pleasing ideas of our reconciliation, I assumed an air of ease and resignation; but as this was a situation very difficult to support long together, and as I found myself still disordered with the pain in my head, I seized the first opportunity of retiring to my chamber; where, my supper being brought me, I went to bed.

I shall not, Madam, attempt to describe the opposite passions I had to struggle with, now I was retired from company, and was at liberty to indulge all the various reflections that intruded themselves upon my mind. It is sufficient to say, that I felt a confused and disturbed mixture of pleasure and pain. But whether the reliefs I found from the consideration of having regained the favour of an indulgent parent, together with the thoughts of the joy he felt at finding me still innocent, were more powerful than all the cause I had for an uneasiness; or whether my spirits sinking under the pleasing flow of those dutiful affections which I had indulged without restraint, made me more heavy than usual, I soon fell into a delightful slumber which lasted till morning, when I found myself perfectly recovered from every indisposition: but the moment I opened my eyes, the dear idea of my lover returned again upon my mind; while I recollected his air, his words, his gestures, the purity of his soul, and the sublimity of his virtues, all had a thousand winning graces; pleasing in the

the review, yet painful in the idea of their being nothing to me, since I must forget to admire, forget to love this dear engaging man, whom my heart represented as all lovely.

I was in this situation, Madam, when I wrote you my last letter, which I began as soon as I had slipped on my clothes, and which took up great part of the day in writing; and indeed, though I then filled two sheets of paper with my scribbling, I ought in strict propriety to have carried it thus far. But my adventures come in such swift succession that, I can't pretend to keep pace with them. I have a very interesting scene to relate, and as I foresee it will take up too much time for me to give it you now entire, I chuse to defer it till my next. And am,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA

L E T T E R . XXI.

Dear MADAM,

I HAD such a variety of painful and agreeable things remaining when I concluded my last, that it was with the extremest reluctance I found myself obliged, either to break off, or to give you such a loose general account of the changes in my affairs, as would be entirely unaffecting; or else, after having raised your curiosity, to break off, and give you the pain of waiting several days in a tedious suspense. But I have now an opportunity of continuing my story, without any of those inconveniencies.

The day after that, in which I was restored to my father's favour, and lost to the pleasing joys of love, and all the flattering delights I had formed an idea of, the sweets of the most innocent sympathies, and the uniform transports of a blissful union of souls; the day after this important one, I say, I scarcely saw my father till the evening: for having soon after I rose in the morning, tenderly enquired into the state of my health, he left us to spend the day with some neighbouring gentleman. Upon his return we were all sur-

prised

was surprised to find him ruffled and disturbed by passion; and naturally enquiring what was the cause of his uneasiness, how great was my astonishment and concern to hear him tell me, that he had received the grossest insults from Lucius's father! 'tis true said he, he was disordered with wine; but it is also true too, that he has affronted me in the presence of several gentlemen, in a manner that I can't help resenting. As I had given him no cause of offence every body took my part; and, as is usual on such occasions, freely gave me an account of the several debaucheries of his life; he is guilty of every extravagance, and is, they tell me, just upon the brink of ruin. Can I think of being allied to such a wretched family? No, child, I must repeat my request, that you will never more entertain the least thought of his unhappy son.

Though I had before hardly any hopes of ever obtaining Lucius, yet I could not hear this repeated injunction, without feeling a great addition of pain. My father was now confirmed in his opposition to my desires, and had some reason to be averse to our union. Could I then entertain the least distant thought of a change in my affairs? I durst not even think it possible. I had not the least glimmering hope of ever being happy, unless I could erase from my heart, the tender impressions I found there of my dear Lucius, and that seemed as great an impossibility as that I should ever obtain him. I was so much struck with this thought, that I was hardly able to make an answer, and only replied, I am extremely sorry for it, Sir; but if you knew Lucius, you would be far from thinking him guilty of his father's crimes, of which he is perfectly incapable: but I shall say no more, I will study to obey you.

My aunt, perhaps thinking this an improper time to vindicate my lover, as my father was not a little disturbed with passion, seemed to avoid entering into the subject; but Mellifont, who as he was upon the point of being united to Amelia, had been fully let into the state of our affairs, and who was now present could not help vindicating his friend, with a warmth that greatly increased my esteem for him; and which I saw, by Amelia's eyes, was not much less pleasing to her; but

but all he could say had but little effect upon my father; his most forcible arguments could not persuade him to believe, but that the vices of a parent must have some effect on the minds of his children. 'Tis true, he was not now in a disposition to hear reason, especially on a subject so opposite to the tumultuous state of his own mind, which had fixed prepossessions almost unconquerable. But he was soon in a better disposition; Lucius himself removed all his prejudices, and convinced him of his innocence, and in a happy moment inspired him with the highest esteem.

The next morning, as I lay longer than usual, I breakfasted in bed; a thing very uncommon in this part of the world; where, as I have told you, it is not unusual for fine ladies to arise with the sun; but I had scarcely drank my chocolate, when Amelia came running into my chamber, to inform me that Lucius was just come, and that he was now in a close conversation with my aunt. Seized with a sudden flutter and perturbation of spirits, I leaped out of bed and slipped on my clothes, with as much speed as possible; at the same time asking her abundance of questions all in a breath; as whether he had seen my father? if he had informed him who he was? what passed between them? and several other things I was desirous of knowing: and so great was my impatience to be informed of these particulars, that I could hardly stay for an answer. I would be informed of every thing at once, and was almost angry at her making me lose the time of asking her. And was not this eagerness very natural, Madam? Indeed I could not help it; I acted merely from instinct. It was my heart that wanted to be informed, and the strange emotion I felt there caused such a swift succession of ideas, that every moment's delay seemed an age. Amelia talks with as much fluency as most people I ever conversed with, yet I thought she dreamed out her syllables to an unnatural length; and though I was never dressed so quick in my life, I could not be persuaded that I ever was half so long about it. But I do not consider that while I am describing my own impatience,

am still encreasing yours. She told me that my father, not knowing who he was, had behaved with the polite-

ness

els due to a stranger, and upon my aunt's saying he as one of her best friends, had even gone so far as to tell him, that he should be glad of the honour of his acquaintance, and that it would be a particular favour, now he was there, he would give him a few hours of his company.

What a happy omen! cried I—Is it possible?—Are you sure he said so?—Well, and what else?—Come, quick, my dear—With what an extasy were these words uttered? What else, Madam, returned she, what should he say else?—He said nothing more I assure you.—You will easily imagine that Lucius accepted the proposal. Well, but my dear Amelia, returned I, with the same rapidity, are you sure you have told me all?—Come, begin again, and don't forget the least particular. Here Amelia, with a smile, did as I desired; only adding, that my father seemed agreeably surprised at Lucius's graceful manner of expressing himself. Did he? cried I, with a fresh transport; how could you forget such a charming circumstance? But what then were Lucius's words?—

Thus I employed my time till I was ready to go downstairs, when reflecting that what I had considered as a subject of joy, was but an airy vision, a delusion of fancy; since the ease and politeness of my father's behaviour to Lucius proceeded only from his not knowing him. My fears now returned with double weight, while my heart ached and fluttered with a painful palpitation, which encreased at every step I took, as I drew nearer my father and my lover. In what a terrible suspense, thought I, is poor Lucius! how will he be able to make the important discovery? important! thought I again, how is it important? since it will only raise my father's resentment. And the next moment, I imagined I saw him pale and trembling, at hearing my father's stern command to forbear his addresses.—But these torturing reflections were in a great measure put an end to by my entering the room, where Lucius, my father and my aunt, were in full conversation on some indifferent subjects. Lucius, the moment he saw me, arose with a blush, and bowing low, seated himself again, and continued the conversation. What a strange course

course of wild and incoherent ideas now distracted my heart! my soul, filled with a confused agony, was scarcely able to attend to any distinct sensation. I was bewildered in a maze of thought. What a strange situation of mind! Is this the last time, said I to myself, with a sigh, as soon as I was capable of giving the least order to my ideas, the last, the very last time of my seeing this dear man? the last time that I shall hear his voice! that voice that has so often awak'd all the powers of my soul to harmony and love! that voice which I have so often heard with rapture, while, as if all ears, I have hung upon his lips, and listened to the tender, melodious accents of his tongue! Oh! how shall I support his absence? how tear myself from this dear portion for ever! never more to converse with my fellow mind! never more to hear and see his heart speak to me! To forget him! to forget the dear sympathies of love!—to be ignorant of what passes in his breast!—How hard the task! Oh duty! how rigorous are thy demands!—But 'tis resolved, and I will, I will obey.

Had I not been seated in the darkest part of the room, and at the farthest distance from my father, it would have been impossible for him not to have taken notice of the disorder these cruel thoughts imprinted on my countenance. But I was soon diverted from these gloomy images, by Lucius, who trembling, with a soft and timorous air, changed all at once the subject that had employed the attention of all the company but me; and fixing his eyes steadily on my father, You have professed an esteem for me, Sir, said he, which neither my merit, nor the small time I have been in your company, can justify. I am quite unknown to you: you are ignorant that I have raised my ambitious hopes to the happiness of being allied to you: but however you receive this confession, do me the justice to believe, that I have never presumed to harbour a thought of obtaining your daughter without your consent; I love her too tenderly to injure you, or to think of depriving her of your affection, by persuading her to forget her duty. You alone have a right to dispose of her; and, Oh! Sir, it is in your power to render me happy or miserable.

able. With what pain did he utter these words! and with what an earnest beseeching look were they concluded! As for my father, the moment Lucius, softening his voice, began to change the discourse, he started, and viewing him with an earnestness mixed with surprise, seemed to hear him with patience, and even let him conclude without once attempting to interrupt him; while I, swallowed up in attention, felt for some time a suspension of all thought, of all sensation and idea. My soul seemed a void, every passion was hushed, and every power waited for the next words to teach them how to act, and to set all in motion again. When my father replied, I shall neither take upon me to enquire how far you have carried this regard for my authority, nor whether you are worthy of her affection. She is very dear to me, and I have chose a husband for her every way capable of making her happy. You will oblige me then, if you promise never to see her more. Well, Sir, I cannot complain, returned he, with a trembling voice;—this is no more than I ought to have expected. I must lose the lovely Felicia then for ever!—Well, you shall be obeyed—whatever it cost me you shall!—here he paused, as if unable to proceed, and then continued, No, I'll never be an obstacle to her happiness; she shall never more be made uneasy by my presence, nor tempted to disobey you, by knowing my despair.

O! Madam, it was impossible for me to support the effects of such generous, painful sentiments; a flood of tender sorrow poured into my heart, my head grew giddy, and a thick film in an instant overcast my eyes, and trembling, and sick, while every thing ran round, I seemed sinking into death. My aunt perceived me, while my head was yet supported by the back of my chair, and my looks steadily fixed upon Lucius, when observing my paleness, and crying out, Felicia is fainting! she ran to support me in her arms, just as I was ready to fall upon the floor. It was a considerable time, I believe, before I was brought to myself, but being still very sick and low spirited, my aunt advised me to be laid upon my bed, when Amelia supporting me by one arm, and one of the servants by the other, I was conveyed

conveyed into my chamber, where I remained for some time, in a state little better than that of entire insensibility, during which, my aunt was so kind as to keep me company, sitting all the while by my bed-side with a bottle of salts in her hand.

As soon as I had perfectly recovered my senses, and began to look about me, the first question I asked was, if Lucius was gone? but my aunt could not satisfy me. I then desired her to tell me how he behaved, and what impression my disorder had upon him; but she avoided answering my question, by saying, Pray, my dear, don't make these useless enquiries.—As you must now endeavour to forget him, it would have but an unhappy effect to store your mind with thoughts that would only increase the difficulty of conquering your affection. But she had scarcely made this prudent reply, when Amelia running into my room, and embracing me with an ecstasy of joy, O my dear, cried she, with tears starting from her eyes, Lucius has conquered; my uncle submits, and gives you up to your lover!—It is impossible! cried I, filled with an amazement that almost deprived me again of my just recovered senses. It is true!—it is true! I assure you it is true! resumed she, with the same transport. Here my aunt checked her friendly ardor, which she feared might over-power my spirits, and forcing me to take a glass of wine and drops, to prepare me for what I had to hear, desired Amelia to relate every thing that had passed; when, seizing her hand, I entreated her to make haste, but not to forget the least particular. She smiled at my eagerness, and with that satisfaction in her looks, which always appears when a good mind has it in its power to confer an extraordinary joy, without any farther ceremony began thus:

The moment my mamma ran to prevent your falling from your chair, Lucius cast his eyes upon you too; but he no sooner beheld you, my dear, in that frightful situation, than he appeared in a disorder very little different from yours; but immediately recollecting himself, he joined with my uncle in using all his endeavours to recover you. He ran himself to fetch water, and gave it to your father, who sprinkled your face; he

he ran for more; he flew into the drawing-room for my mother's smelling-bottle, then for some drops. In short we had no need of any of the servants, he himself was more active than they all put together could have been; and did a thousand mean offices for you, if any thing can be called mean that is done for a person in such a situation. His life, his happiness, his all seemed at stake. And though he could not have the least hopes of obtaining you, his looks expressed a tenderness and solicitude that I could not help thinking even excelled your father's. Tho' he durst not approach you with the same freedoms as he did, yet he stood behind him, with his eyes fixed on your faded cheeks, while the tears ran down his, that with his fright wanted little of being as pale as yours; but the instant your colour began a little to return, his came in proportion; and as his apprehensions vanished, his countenance entirely changed. You opened your eyes; we said you would recover; he was in a fresh transport, and seemed at that moment to have forgot that that was to be the last time of his seeing you. Ah! my dear Felicia, continued she smiling, do you think Mellifont, in the same case, would have expressed an equal tenderness for me?—I can hardly believe it.

O! my dear Lucius! cried I (shedding some extatic tears) but proceed. Well, resumed she, as soon as I came from helping you up stairs, having asked me how you did, he turned to my uncle, and giving him a supplicating look, since I must never more, said he with a sigh, behold your dear Felicia, permit me, Sir, to stay till she comes to herself. I don't ask to see her again, but—Enough, Sir, returned my uncle, you may stay and welcome; and I take this opportunity of thanking you for the service we have received from you, in giving us your assistance: it was generous, and what after the declaration I had made you, I had not the least reason to expect; but instead of being reproached I was to be obliged. My sister has done you justice in saying you have a mind very different from your father's, and therefore I believe you will not vindicate his extravagancies; and it is his character, more than any disparity of circumstances, that makes me averse to

your having my daughter; but if you are an honest man you will not justify him. The savage brute had—Who, Sir? what my father? cried Lucius; while I was surprised to hear the person who had hitherto spoken with such submissive respect, now assume a tone so resolute and lofty. Yes, your father! returned my uncle as loud as he. He insulted me—vilely insulted me, in the presence of several gentlemen, who turned him out of the room. They gave me his character, related many of his outrages, and convinced me, that he is a debauched abandoned fellow—a villain—My father a debauched, abandoned fellow! resumed Lucius, in the same tone! My father a villain! Nothing but your near relation to Felicia could prevent my resenting the opprobrious epithets. Heavens! my father called a villain, and can I hear it with patience? Oh! Sir, continued he, softening his voice, spare my father! Why is it not true? returned my uncle—Is he not my father? cried Lucius, interrupting him: Oh, Sir! can I have so little delicacy, so little sense of duty, or honour, as not to resent such language? Can I be a son and yet be void of filial affection, as not to feel my heart rise with indignation, and every passion swell to justify my father? Then you justify your father, replied my uncle again. I beg, returned Lucius, you would not press this subject. You are Felicia's father, and he is mine; I would therefore preserve a respect for you both. Mine has, I confess, his faults, but he has his virtues too. His faults I would conceal from all the world; I would bury them in eternal oblivion; I would blot them even from my own remembrance; I would wipe them from my thoughts, to save myself the preposterous shame of blushing for a parent. But yet, whatever he may deserve, I am sure I don't deserve to hear him treated so.

My uncle here, continued Amelia, sat fixed in admiration, while friendship and surprise were mingled in his looks; he was silent; he seemed at a loss for an answer, when at last, giving Lucius his hand, Your sentiments are admirable, Sir, cried he, and I can't help thinking him very happy, in having so generous a son, so good an advocate. I beg pardon for my want of delicacy,

licacy, in shocking yours. Here hesitating a moment, with a friendly disorder in his countenance, that shewed him stopped with an effecting thought, which he waited to indulge, he resumed, But if a father who has taken so little care of his family, can inspire in a son such tender duty ! such noble friendship, how great would be that son's affection, had he one who employed the whole bent of his soul in contributing to his felicity ? You can't conceive, my dear Felicia, continued she, how feelingly these words were expressed. Lucius himself, notwithstanding his disappointed hopes, seemed extremely moved with them, when, with a colour as red as scarlet, he hastily replied, 'Twas in you, Sir, that I hoped to have found such a father ; but why did I hope it ? that is now impossible, I shall see your dear, your charming Felicia no more. 'Tis true my presumption in daring to love her is inexcusable ; but I will try whether absence and philosophy can teach me to conquer my passion. If they cannot, I must be unhappy. Here he arose with a visible confusion in his looks, and added with a sigh, Pray send to know how she does, for I must retire.

Lucius having taken a turn or two about the room, with a disorder that I don't know how to express, but which seemed to rise from his thinking he had said too much, by confessing the pleasure he had felt in hoping for a father of my uncle's virtues ; (for those words seemed to break rather from his heart than his tongue) Lucius, I would say, having taken a turn about the room, and finding my uncle make no reply to his desire of knowing how you did, opened the door, saying, Your servant, Sir ; I wish Felicia happy. I will send myself to know if she is recovered. When seeing him going, your father arose, desired him to stay a little longer, and told him, he could not part him so suddenly. Upon this your lover returned, and they both being again seated, after a short silence (for your father, my dear, continued she, appeared buried in thought) he resumed, I confess, Sir, I admire your virtues, and am persuaded we shall part upon much better terms ; pray let me know the circumstances of your family, and whether you have any estate in your own hands. Here

I took upon me to reply, and endeavoured to give him the characters of Sophronia and Marilla, which I told my uncle I could do with a much better grace than Lucius, as his modesty might be offended, should he do justice to persons whose merit was so nearly allied to his, that he could not be supposed to praise them as they deserved, without reflecting great part of the honour upon himself. But, my dear Felicia, this was not my real motive; I could not sit by and see such a charming reconciliation carried on, without desiring, at least, to have a small share in it. I had waited a good while to put in a word that might be of service to you, but could not find a better opportunity than that which now offered.

Well, thank you, my dear, replied I; but pray proceed. You might have told me that to-morrow. Come, make haste. Your father, Miss, continued she, appeared extremely delighted with what he heard; nor was he much less pleased to hear Lucius tell him, that he had an estate (which though much less than yours, might serve to vindicate his giving him his daughter;) and indeed he was no sooner informed of these particulars, than taking Lucius's hand, with an affectionate smile, he cried, Your virtue, Sir, has conquered. I admire your sentiments, and approve Felicia's choice. I give you my daughter, and wish you all imaginable happiness. With a rapidity as quick as thought, he now threw himself at my uncle's feet. He was unable to speak; he grasped his hand, and wetted it with tears, and I having waited for a minute for some fine extatic rapture, and perceiving him still silent, flew to be the first messenger of this delightful news.

O! cried I aloud, sure this is all a dream; am I—am I so happy? so very happy? where is my father? where is my Lucius? I will run and indulge my fondness for them both. Then, seeing my aunt laughing at my rapture, I flew into her arms, embraced her, and then Amelia. Come, continued I, let us go; I can't stay a moment. They humoured my impatience, and all of us ran together into the parlour. My father was standing with his eyes affectionately fixed on Lucius, who stood by him holding his hand, and I suppose giving a

look

loose to all the rapture of a transported heart; when breaking from him, my father flew to receive me with open arms. Come, my child, cried he, share in my satisfaction.—I approve your choice. It shall now be this gentleman's study to render you happy. Here having embraced me with a tender affection, he took hold of my hand, when asking Lucius for his, he laid mine upon it, and then grasped both together, God bless you both; my children, cried he, lifting up his eyes while the tears stole down his cheeks; God bless you both, and render your happiness eternal. Do you, my son, remember, added he, (still holding our hands, while he suffered Lucius to close his upon mine, with a tender pressure which my father rendered yet more pleasing by holding both ours between his) remember that as by your virtue you now arrive at the height of your wishes, so only your virtue will render your happiness compleat and durable. Then turning to me, he proceeded, and do you, my dear, remember, that now all your felicity in this life depends on your pleasing Lucius. He is your own choice, and I command you, as you expect to be happy, never to mention, or by the least action let him think, that you believe him obliged to you for the great addition that, by your means, is made to his fortune. God bless you both my children! To this my aunt and Amelia gave a happy Amen, when giving us an affectionate shake, he let go our hands, and Lucius embraced me with transport, while my aunt and cousin drew near to congratulate us on this happy occasion. Their eyes sparkled with joy, their faces glow'd with pleasure, and every word and every look spoke the sympathy between their hearts and ours; wherever we turned our eyes, the soul of happiness sat beaming in every look, they beheld us with the transport Mr. Thompson describes, when he says,

“ 'Twas friendship heighten'd by the mutual wish,
 “ Th' enchanting hope and sympathetic glow,
 “ Struck from the charming eye. Devoting each
 “ To love.————

While my father stood looking on, with a superior degree of conscious pleasure in his air,

“Supremely happy in th’ awaken’d power
“Of giving joy.———

The evening was spent with pleasure and delight. Sophronia and Marilla were sent for, and bore a part in our common satisfaction. And nothing then seemed wanting to render our felicity complete. Yet I assure you, Madam, not all this delight could prevent my anticipating the pleasure you would receive from this happy news, nor erase from my thoughts the remembrance of how much I am,

Your LADYSHIP’S
Most obliged Servant,
FELICIA.

L E T T E R XXII.

My dear FRIEND,

WHILE I was reading yours, every line of which expressed the most generous and tender sympathy in my distress, I could not help being extremely delighted with the thought, that you were perhaps the same moment engaged in perusing my last, where you would learn that you might freely banish all your fears, since I must now appear greatly above your pity. It was a pleasing reflection, Madam, and I assure you I could not entertain myself with the satisfaction you would receive on this occasion, without feeling a great increase of my own. Sure nothing can be more natural than to share in the joy we ourselves occasion, when self-love and friendship both conspire to aid the sympathetic delight; and to reflect back the pleasure another feels from our happiness.

But what a strange scheme! could any thing be more extravagant! to send all my letters to my father, to open his eyes to the perfections of my lover, and to convince him, as you say, from those unguarded overflowings of my heart, that our passion has been hitherto
carried

carried on with the strictest regard to virtue, and all the obligations of duty. Really it was an excellent artifice, to remove his prejudices; and for what I know, might have been attended with success. I was present when my father received the parcel, and could not help being a witness of the surprise he discovered at seeing a large bundle of letters enclosed; when having given me that directed for me, and read yours to himself; he called my aunt aside, and smiling, retired with her to read their contents, while I was under little or no apprehensions of the consequence of having those tender transcripts of my heart discovered; for though I had entirely forgot the contents of most of my letters, my consciousness of the sincerity of my duty, kept my mind at ease, and would not suffer me to fear that I had wrote any thing that could possibly offend him. But I had no sooner read yours, and indulged, for a considerable time, some of those pleasing thoughts due to friendship and you, than a sudden restless impulse of curiosity made me long to know what effect my letters had on those interested persons, my father and my aunt; I therefore arose, in order to attempt a discovery, which I had not patience to wait for, till they made it themselves. I found them in my aunt's closet, and the door not being locked, I gently pushed it a little open, and saw them both seated with their backs towards me, with the escutore, before which they were sitting, covered with papers. The good lady was listening to my father, who continued reading with a low voice, while she looked over him; but I had not stood a minute in this situation, when turning their heads so that I discovered half their faces, on which were imprinted some lively traces of satisfaction, they gave each other a glance, my father crying out at the same time, O the dear girl! elated with this tender exclamation, I took a step farther, and forgetting that I was only a kind of a spy, and ought therefore to be concealed, I pushed the door a little too rudely, which grating against the floor, they both started, and turning their eyes to the place from whence the noise proceeded, discovered me. I was now quite disconcerted, and you may be sure had an air not a little ridiculous; for my curiosity now

appeared worthy of shame ; and therefore casting down my eyes, was at a loss whether to go in or retire ; but before I could determine, my aunt put an end to my embarrassment, by calling out, What, Felicia, is it you ? I could be almost angry with you. We were reading your soul, it was talking with us ; and here you like a little impertinent, must come and interrupt the entertainment you yourself was giving us. At this I boldly entered the room, when they both joining in their caresses, and I making some apologies, frankly confessed the motive of my coming, and the effect my father's goodness had in making me unattentive to the necessary precautions of being concealed. They laughed at my ingenuity, and having, at their request, brought them your letters, and placed them in the order I received them, I left them to their entertainment ; and going down stairs took a walk with Amelia in the garden, where we for some time indulged the pleasure of discoursing on each other's happiness. We then made a comparison between love and friendship, talked of you and in short, were very merry with your expedient for promoting my felicity.

O Madam ! when our minds, after a dreadful form that has threatened the wreck of all that is most dear and valuable, perceive themselves entirely at ease, and wafted by the chearful gale of every pleasing passion, we find new charms in all around us ; a thousand opening joys, that would otherwise pass unheeded break in upon our souls, and contribute to heighten our satisfaction ; we have a quicker taste for every new accession of delight, and filled with that complacency which makes us look upon every thing with a smile, every object in return seems to smile upon us. And while we are in this situation not only friendship and love wrap up our minds in the most pure ethereal delights, but the glittering sun-beams, the balmy breeze, the verdant groves, and all the lavish bounty of nature, give us a sensual pleasure. O how sweet are the delights which heaven has prepared for mortals ! but how much more exquisite are the charms of innocence and conscious virtue, which give a pleasing relish to all these natural beauties ! Affliction and distress, in rankling

care

care and all the painful, bitter gush of grief, the dark-
some shades of providence! like the clouds and storms
of nature, roaring round the high-raised mountain,
and echoing with a horrid yell through all her distant
caverns, serve to beautify the variegated scene, and
heighten the glow of her returning smiles: our tears,
“the rain of eyes,” swell the humane blossom; the
kindly shower cherishes the hidden seeds of virtue, opens
the lovely foliage, and with the next returning sun the
fresh budding graces stand confessed. But to return from
this long digression, which I hope you will think not
altogether impertinent.

At dinner I had the pleasure of Lucius's company, a
happiness I now enjoy every day; when I took notice
that my father, who could not have yet read half my
letters, behaved with a peculiar complaisance, and treat-
ed him with a respect I have never observed before; and
indeed if his esteem and affection for Lucius increases
as it has done since our grand reconciliation, he may
possibly be in a greater haste to compleat our union
than I desire he should be; for between you and I, I
begin to grow a coward, and am a little afraid of enter-
ing into the awful awkward state, from whence, you
know, as from the regions of death, there is no return.
However, your example, and that of Amelia's, I don't
doubt, will give me the courage necessary to go through
the solemn ceremony with a pretty good grace.—But I
find my happiness makes me grow lazy, and as I have
nothing now very material to add, shall conclude,

Yours, &c.

FELICIA.

L E T T E R XXIII.

Dear M A D A M,

MY father's affection for Lucius is now arisen to
such a height, that I hardly know whether he
or I have the greatest share in his heart; they are be-
come almost inseparable, and are united in a friendship
that appears very extraordinary in persons between
whom there is such a wide difference, with respect to

age. He is perpetually at our house, and the company of the lover is pretty equally shared between the happy father and the still more happy daughter. Methinks this indulgent parent is still more lavish of his caresses to me than usual, he is continually approving my choice, and giving me instructions to regulate my conduct by such rules, as he says, will render my felicity complete. He has read to me several Spectators on this subject, to which he has subjoined many observations that have fallen within his own notice. And I assure you, Madam, it shall be my care to put all his wise maxims in practice. To study our own happiness, and that of those we love, is an affair of the utmost consequence, nor can we take too much pains in the noble employment which is at once both our duty, our honour, and the source of the most solid and lasting joys. My soul is too delicate, and my tenderness for the amiable Lucius too sublime to suffer me to think, without pain, on those little jars, those petty quarrels, which interrupt the felicity of some of the most happy pairs, and sometimes make breaches dreadfully fatal to their future repose. They are upon their guard as to things that seem of importance, but while their minds lie open to trifles, those trifles soon become affairs of the utmost consequence. To these little incidents we are continually exposed, and therefore, as my father says, they are much more to be feared than those that, at first view, appear of the greatest moment. However, the task which he has inculcated cannot be very displeasing, since all his rules are perfectly agreeable to my inclinations, and only consist of such maxims as must, if observed, perpetuate our mutual felicity. O my dear friend! tell me (for you know) if there can be greater pleasure than that which results from the reflection of pleasing a person dearer, infinitely dearer to us than ourselves. The grateful look, the kindling glance, the expressive glow of tender fondness, silently shot from the thankful eye—O! can there be a greater reward, to soften the charming toil, if that can be called a toil that will gladden the heart we love? For this I will read and study to enrich my mind, for this I will dress, for this I will plot out new arts to please, while virtue, innocence and truth shall lead the

the way, and mark my path to lasting bliss. What delight the distant prospect beams upon my soul! My Lucius! my husband! my friend! dear epithets!—enchanted sounds!—sounds swelling with every thrilling joy!—O all gracious being! may my abilities be equal to the ardor of my soul! may the wife be lost in the friend; the soft, the tender, the generous friend!

These last thoughts arise in my mind whenever I entertain myself with the grateful subject of my father's instructions: but the pleasure I may be supposed to receive from these resolutions, is extremely damped by abundance of intruding fears that dash my joys with a mixture of bitterness; I tremble, lest in the unguarded moments of my life, I should drop the guard I resolve to keep over my temper; lest I should forget to please, or lose the power of doing it. Thoughts that are always attended with pain.

You see what a fond unfashionable creature I am grown; but as your ladyship has given me some reason to believe that you are not less weak than myself, I boldly brave your satire; so that if you make merry with me on this occasion, I shall freely join in the laugh.

My happiness is now so great, that there seems nothing wanting but the consideration of its being perpetual, to render it complete: nor does Amelia's appear less exquisite than mine; we are surrounded with every laughing delight, every social endearment. The congratulations of our friends, the caresses of our parents, the tenderness of our lovers, and the pleasing sympathy in each other's felicity, all contribute to heighten our joy; while rapture itself grows more pleasing, by settling into a serene and most charming tranquility. Every thing is preparing for the ceremony that is to unite us for ever to the dearest persons on earth; and next Thursday Amelia and I are to be hailed under the title of Brides, and initiated into the dignified state of venerable Matrons. And between you and I, Madam, we both heartily wish these solemn doings over, for really they have something terrible in them that frights at a distance.

Thus far, Madam, I had written yesterday, at which time I had no other care than how to render Lucius and myself

myself as happy as possible, except some little intruding thoughts of the awkward appearance I should make at church, and those natural inquietudes which are apt to perplex the mind upon the view of an important change in our circumstances, all which were counterbalanced by abundance of the most charming reflections: but the scene soon changed. Alas! what is life, but a perpetual round of vexation and disappointment! a rapid succession of intermingled pleasures or pains! these cares and these delightful thoughts soon vanished, they gave place to cares of a more bitter kind, unmixed with the least thought that could alleviate their force, or still the tumult of my troubled mind.

Yesterday we had Mellifont's company as usual. The time past away very agreeably, and though I had not seen Lucius all the preceding day, I felt little uneasiness on account of his absence. I knew if he was ill I should have heard from him, and therefore did not question but he was detained by some extraordinary business, which would be no sooner finished than I should see him again, with a satisfaction that would be greatly increased by our being deprived for a short time of each others company. Thus, while anticipating the eagerness with which I fancied he would fly to me, the pleasure I should observe in his countenance, and the tender apologies he would doubtless make on this occasion, I recompensed myself for the loss of a present gratification, with the pleasing thoughts of the future. Though Mellifont, Amelia, and even my aunt could not help censuring him a little severely, while I took his part with a good deal of vivacity, and let them know that I did not think I had the least reason to be offended.

However, in the evening, I had the satisfaction of seeing him enter the court; my heart bounded with joy, and a sudden thrill of delight darted through every vein. He entered the room, he saluted me, but with such a kind of cold restraint, as at once alarmed and pierc'd my soul; I knew not what to think, nor how to behave. I felt an emotion which I know not how to describe, a painful flutter of my spirits: when having made a short apology, by saying he had been detained
by

by some affairs of the utmost consequence, he took his seat, and joined in the conversation, with a distraction that was too visible for me not to take particular notice of it, while methought he had an air of constraint that seemed quite unnatural to him. He avoided looking at me, and whenever his eyes chanced to meet mine, he suddenly cast them down. O what could I think? could I imagine that he was grown perfidious, and that I had lost my empire over his heart? No, I could not believe it: I could not entertain a thought so injurious to the fair idea I had conceived of his truth and goodness. However, all that engaging frankness which had hitherto appeared on his countenance was vanished, and I was ignorant of the cause. Some strange event, thought I, must have happened in which, I am greatly interested. I was ready to imagine any thing rather than that Lucius, my dear dear Lucius, could be false.

At last, Mellifont and Amelia leaving the room, my aunt soon followed, and we were left together, without the interruption of company; a situation which I had long'd for ever since I observed this restraint on his behaviour, though his coldness would not suffer me to take any measures to obtain this satisfaction. His eyes now softened, while drooping with some secret care, every feature had an air of reluctant languishment. His tenderness had a mixture of fear and compassion, and methought he even seemed to dread my reproaches. We both continued silent, his eyes were steadily fixed on mine. A sigh, a tear escaped him. He held down his head, to stifle his sighs, to hide his tears. Oh how nearly did they touch me! what a violent emotion did they raise in my breast! my heart throbb'd—a pang of grief and soft surprise struck thro' my soul. I longed to know the cause of what I saw, yet dreaded to ask it. When at last, breaking silence, O my dear Lucius, cried I, unable to restrain my tears, tell me, for heaven's sake, tell me what is the matter?—What is it that disturbs you?—I must know it. Have you a care that I have not a right to share with you? Let me know what dreadful misfortune it is that gives you this pain. Indeed, if I can, I will remove it. At this I sighed
and

and wiped my eyes, while he, with his still fixed on the floor, echoed back my sighs, when, as if struggling to conquer the glut of sorrow which choaked up his voice, O my Felicia, my dear, my lovely Felicia! said he, let me persuade you to forget me; I will never involve you in the miseries of our unhappy family.—What do you mean? cried I, hastily interrupting him, and scarce able to believe my ears, I don't understand you.—Alas! my dear, rejoined he, in a sorrowful tone, you can't be mine, I don't deserve—How! interrupted I again, stunned at his words; but immediately, my pride helping me to recollect myself, I coldly rejoined, Well, Sir, just as you please.

Here I was going to fling out of the room, when a sudden glance in a moment dispelled my indignation, while love, with all its humbling powers, took entire possession of my soul. I saw him with his eyes greedily fixed on me; they overflowed with a melting softness, and, at the same time, sparkling through the crystal swell, with awful dignity, seemed to express some great, some hidden purpose. Every degree of confusion was vanished, not the least tincture of shame remained. His countenance had an air of open frankness, and no other traces were visible there but those of perfect tenderness and soft regret. What could I now think? or what could I say? I perceived that there was some extraordinary cause that forced him to behave in this manner; I perceived (or at least I thought I did) that it was with reluctance he struggled against his love, and endeavoured to forget me; yet I flattered myself, that if I did but know the motive to this painful task, I should be able to give him some relief, and perhaps let him see, that there was no occasion for such a victory over his passion: yet, however glad I should have been to have heard his reasons, I had still too much pride to suffer me to enquire into them; the shame of meanly stooping to desire to be informed of these particulars, shocked me immediately; I saw plainly that this would appear too forward, and too evidently express the difficulty I should have to overcome my tenderness.

These reflections, which glanced through my mind in a moment, kept me silent, and prevented my asking

to be informed of what I impatiently longed to hear; when finding me still continue speechless, You wonder, my dear, said Lucius, and are at a loss to find arguments to excuse my behaviour, but could I prefer my own happiness to your's, I might still be as blest as I could wish; as blest as the most high wrought imagination can conceive: I might barbarously consult my own felicity to the prejudice of your happiness and future peace of mind. But I love you more dearly than life, and therefore can never consent to involve you in my misfortunes. I will never be guilty of such baseness. Oh my dear Felicia! call not this a want of affection, rather think it the triumph of the most perfect love, the strongest proof of the most generous, most disinterested tenderness.—But what will this cost me?—In losing you, I abandon every earthly joy—I bid adieu to the most pleasing prospects, to the enchanting sweets of the most pure and virtuous—To see you no more!—

At this moment, my aunt's return put a stop to this moving discourse; when Lucius and I, endeavouring to compose our countenances, he enquired if my father would return that evening, (for he had been out all day) and being told he would, he promised to come the next morning early to pay him his respects, and immediately left us.

In this situation I am in at present, I form a thousand conjectures, each of which perhaps is groundless; and notwithstanding all my endeavours to penetrate the cause of this sudden change, am as much in the dark as ever. However, I must believe him sincere, and therefore can't suspect that he wants a pretence to break his engagements: No, I am sure he tenderly loves me.—It would be criminal to doubt it. But a few hours more will now discover the whole affair, till when, at least, I shall be,

Your LADYSHIP's,
Most unhappy Friend,
FELICIA.

P. S. The uneasy torment of suspense, not allowing me to sleep, I could not think of any expedient to pass away the tedious interval till Lucius's return, so agreeably

agreeably as in opening my heart to you : I therefore arose two hours before the rest of the family, and employed my time in writing you the above.

L E T T E R XXIV.

My dear FRIEND,

I NOW send you two letters together, the dates of which will tell you in what order they are to be read. In the first you find me plunged into fresh anxiety, into all the pains of disappointed love. In this you will see the cause of this mighty change, a great mind struggling between love and generosity.

About an hour after I had concluded the other letter, a servant came to tell me that breakfast was ready. I went down with a mind extremely perplexed, when, in spite of all my endeavours to assume an air of ease and gaiety, they perceived my disorder, but instead of enquiring into the reason of it, as I expected, only strove to divert my pensive thoughtfulness, by turning it into ridicule. At last, however, Lucius appeared, and, by his presence, put an end to their unseasonable mirth, which began to grow extremely painful. Breakfast was now over, and the dear youth, desiring my father and I to favour him with our company, went with us into a room, where we had no reason to fear being disturbed; and having taken our seats, with eyes in which were intermingled an air of dignity, with the soft languishment of love, he cast a glance at me, and then fixing them on my father, Sir, cried he, I am now come to thank you for your unmerited goodness, and by an ingenuous confession of my circumstances, to let you see, that I am unworthy of the happiness of possessing your daughter. Nay, Sir, continued he, seeing him look astonished, I don't wonder at your being startled at an address of this nature, but since I can't now marry her with honour, I must do you and her the justice to decline it.

Struck dumb with surprize, my father at first seemed incapable of making a reply ; he riveted his eyes upon Lucius, who at the same time cast his to the floor ;

his

his colour came and went, he knit his brows, while his countenance expressed a confused mixture of vexation, anger and disappointment; when, at last, seeming to collect his scattered thoughts, What can this mean? cried he, I desire you would explain yourself. What disadvantage can there be in your circumstances that you ought not to have mentioned before? It was a base and ungenerous part to endeavour to engage my daughter's affections, and thus to carry things to the last extremity, when you knew you could not marry her with honour; and I don't doubt but she will resent such treatment as she ought. She will regard your conduct as an insult to humanity, and as an affront that deserves only to be answered with contempt.

'Tho' this was expressed with all the bitterness of resentment in his voice and air, yet it appeared to make but little impression on Lucius, only a modest, guiltless blush flashed in his cheek, which seemed to arise from the indignant pride of injured innocence; when finding that my father, by his silence, waited for his answer, I am sorry, Sir, said he, in a bold and manly tone, to find you entertain so ill an opinion of me; but were I that ungrateful wretch you now think me, I should deserve even greater reproaches than those you are pleased to load me with; Felicia's merit would then justify this warmth in an indulgent father; but I beg you would do me the justice to hear me, and I don't doubt but that, notwithstanding I may appear a more unequal match than ever, you will still think I deserve a place in your esteem. My misfortunes call for pity, and not resentment. I have chosen to be unhappy rather than to see my father exposed to the miseries of a prison. I have lost Felicia to save my father!—Think, Sir, what a son must feel at the very thought of seeing a person whom nature, whom ten thousand obligations has bound him to love and revere, in a jail, in a dark, unwholesome prison, excluded from the cheerful face of man, lingering out a wretched being in penury, while he enjoyed—Oh! it is too much; affluence, in such a circumstance, would be a curse, while nature would extinguish all the delight of love, and imbitter its most pleasing sweets.—'Tis true, I might have concealed

cealed my giving up my fortune to procure his liberty
 —I *might* have done it—and had I been base enough
 to injure your goodness, I *had* done it. I might, in
 this case, have confided in the generosity of Felicia's
 mind, who, after our union, might have excused my
 deceiving her, and have kept it a secret. But I could
 neither resolve to marry her in such wretched circum-
 stances, nor to impose upon you. I had yesterday
 morning five thousand pounds, I have now but two, a
 miserable pittance to support the exigence of a family,
 born above the inconveniencies of a low life! for to
 this use it must be applied: Alas! what inconveniencies
 shall we labour under! but what are these inconveni-
 encies to the ten thousand times more painful shock of
 the rich man's scorn, the indignant leer, the contemp-
 tuous taunts and shrugs of the wealthy fool, the dread
 of needy creditors! these, even at a distance, strike
 terror through the soul, and damp the generous pride
 of upright virtue. But is a wretch like this a proper
 match for the lovely, the wealthy Felicia? No, you
 cannot, and I ought not to think it. Instead of an
 estate, shall I bring her the necessities of an unhappy
 family? Forbid it heaven! forbid it love! Can I, in
 these circumstances, ungratefully impose on that gene-
 rosity that made you overlook the disparity of our for-
 tunes, which was too great before? No, no, Sir; you
 must no longer think of me as your son, nor I of her
 as the dear companion of my life. The consciousness
 of having now done my duty, in resigning all my pre-
 tensions, will help me to support her loss—I already
 feel it will—Do you then teach her to forget me. Tho'
 I shall see her no more, she shall have my prayers, and
 all my fondest wishes—Good God! whatever I suffer,
 may Felicia at least be happy! —

O! Madam, had you but seen with what a flood of
 passion this speech was uttered, you would—I am sure
 you would have been extremely moved. He wept—and
 sure never did tears look so graceful on a manly cheek
 before! My father wept too, and I faster than them
 both, while he pursued, without interruption, the noble
 dictates of his generous heart, bursting into the incohe-
 rent language of tender distress. But I must be more

particular

particular with respect to my father, for Lucius had
 edly began his apology, when the resentment which
 ended in his cheek began insensibly to vanish; his
 tures, before swelled with indignation, now sunk
 perceptibly, and left only the soft traces of pity,
 ended with a wonder that seemed to arise amidst those
 generous sentiments, which elevate the soul above it-
 self. He appeared interested in every word the dear
 gaging youth uttered; nor did the broken sighs
 which frequently disjointed them, the groan of his
 robbing heart, the trembling accent of his voice, or
 the least change in his countenance, seem to escape his
 notice. I saw it did not—with a secret joy I saw it;
 and rejoiced in the humanity of his heart which made
 him pity the noble distress of my lover—at this moment
 more dear than ever. Never did the high-wrought
 images of even a fictitious tale present a scene so mov-
 ing as this would have been to an indifferent spectator;
 the most insensible breast must sure have melted into
 softness, the dryest eye have gushed into tears.

After Lucius had finished, there remained a silence
 which lasted near a minute—an awful, tender silence,
 which was only interrupted by a few heaving sighs;
 when at last, my father smiling, with an expressive af-
 fection in his look, Indeed, Sir, said he, I have been
 too hasty, you deserve to be pitied; but what strange
 magic do you find to soften me thus? I profess I have
 not shed so many tears these eighteen years, never since
 I lost Felicia's mother, my dear Elmira. But I beg you
 would do me the favour, my friend, added he, to give
 me the particulars of this affecting story.

Oh! Sir, replied my dear Lucius, you have a right
 to demand every thing from me; and tho' no mercena-
 ry view can tempt me to betray Felicia into ruin, tho'
 I have not the least distant hope of ever obtaining her
 by this confession, which can have no other effect than
 to convince you that heaven never designed her for
 me, the respect I owe you, and the desire I have to ap-
 pear still worthy of your friendship, will make me give
 you all the satisfaction you can desire. Two days ago,
 as I was preparing to pay this lovely maid a visit, a mes-
 senger from my father (who went out pretty early that
 morning)

morning) brought me a note, by which I was informed, that he was under an arrest from one of his principal creditors. What could I do, but instantly fly to him! I found him in the house of one of our dependents, with no other company than the officers who deprived him of his liberty. He received me with an air of dejected sadness, while his attendants stepping to the door, left me at liberty to indulge the torturing anguish of my heart, by endeavouring to give him the comfort I wanted myself. O Lucius! said he, seeing me enter, you see your father a prisoner. This was all he could say, before I sprung into his arms. I could not speak to him; we both seated ourselves on a bench near the table, when having cast his eyes upon me again, with an air of the deepest melancholy and distress, he gave me a particular account of the situation of his affairs; an account that filled my mind with distractions, yet in a great measure put a stop to that torturing hurry, that flutter of spirits with which I had before cast about my thoughts, to give him relief; since I was now sensible that there was but one way to save him, and that, at first view, gave the most violent shock to my soul. Oh! Sir, how hard—how intolerably hard it is to root out of the heart a passion like mine! You, Madam, continued he, looking at me, appeared, in that moment, more charming than ever.—Ten thousand pleasing, distracting ideas crowded upon my mind, and overwhelmed my senses in a mazy whirl of bitter giddiness. My reason seemed departing, while my breast was torn between love and nature, between duty and the tender—too tender softness that melts, and charms, and swallows up the soul. Good God! what did I feel? the sigh, the tear, the unkind reproach from my dear Felicia, and all the distraction of her bosom was felt with a double emphasis in mine; but I soon came to a resolution; the manner in which my father concluded the painful story of the situation of his affairs, fixed my wavering thoughts, called in my reason, and pleaded in his look, his air, his words, so strongly for duty, that it was almost impossible to resist its impulses. Oh Lucius, said he, in a most distressed tone, you see I can have no prospect of relief—No; I have

have not the least hope—the least glimmering hope of ever procuring my liberty. Here pressing my hand, and giving me a look painfully affectionate, It is a melancholy thought, continued he, the dreary horrors of a prison are extremely shocking; they disarm my resolutions, and make a coward of me! But I have nobody to reproach but myself. — To be buried alive, to be forever deprived of that wholesome air which the meanest slaves breathe at liberty—Nay, don't look so tenderly upon me! continued he, pressing my hand again, and then looking at me with the utmost excess of paternal affection, he added, Will you not come to see me?—I could bear no more; these last words pierced through my soul. Don't, pray don't, Sir, distract me with these dreadful thoughts, interrupted I, you shall not go to prison—I am resolved you shan't. What do you mean? returned he, I must, I have no friend to assist me. What am I then? cried I; you shall not, if my life or fortune can prevent it. I will not—I cannot see you so wretched! Mention it no more, returned he, I won't hear of such a proposal. Your whole fortune would scarcely be sufficient—No, no, you shan't ruin yourself for me. I will not purchase my liberty at so dear a price as your happiness. Think what it is you propose. Think of Felicia. Ah! that name will surely call you back to reason; you need but consult your own heart to find that it is she, not I, that must render you happy. Leave me then to the miseries I have brought upon myself. Death will soon put an end to them all; but Oh! how painful is this situation, in which death, so terrible to nature, is my only relief!—A relief do I call it?—would it be a relief to me? No, I fear not, there is something after death, more dreadful than death itself—more terrible than all I suffer. O how happy is the virtuous man, to whom the grim monster appears with an angel's face—with the smiles of immortal beauty! To me it is covered with a dreary gloom that shoots terror through my soul! but when you are happy, Lucius, think of me; visit me in my grave—my prison. Oh! my father, my dear, dear father, cried I, interrupting him again, why will you not hear me? why do you give way to such cruel thoughts?

thoughts? Shall I not have the liberty of disposing of my own? I have already thought of what I lose in forsaking the gentle Felicia. I know my felicity is interwoven with her's. I know that our marriage, on which the happiness of my life depends, will never be concluded, yet I have made my choice. There is something so horrible in the apprehensions of seeing you a prisoner, that I cannot bear to think of it. There are no circumstances in which such a misfortune to you would not render me wretched. Are you not my father? and shall not nature plead for you? Do you think me a fool, and yet believe me capable of struggling against my duty?—my duty to my father—a father from whom I have received numberless obligations, that call for returns of gratitude and love. Think what my mother will feel when she hears of your distress, and tho' I have not the power to shake your resolutions, by my entreaties to accept of what I offer you, let her tears, let her despair touch your heart. Marilla too will be distracted with grief, and I know her so well, that were she of age, she would gladly make you the same offer that I do now. Indeed, Sir, we can none of us feel more misery than in seeing you miserable.—Good God! cried my father, with uplifted hands, teach me how to act. Never did my conduct, in my calmest intervals of reflection appear so black as it does now. Oh Lucius! I am ashamed of thinking how I have injured you. Your kindness is more insupportable than all my sufferings—How severely does all this goodness reproach me—this undeserved goodness. It touches me to the quick—it makes a monster of me—I beg pardon, Sir, replied I, if I have done any thing to occasion these cruel reflections. In serving you I only do my duty.—But ah! it is a painful duty, interrupted he, I know it is, your fortune is your smallest loss. If I accept of it, I deprive you of Felicia's fortune too—and what is infinitely worse to a mind like your's, I deprive you of Felicia! I might have given you a splendid estate, but instead of that to—Oh! how unlike a father, who, instead of a curse, ought to be a blessing to his family! My conduct has been an outrage against nature—a violation of the dearest privileges of a parent—I have forgot

got the obligations of the husband, the father and the friend.—Thy mother too!—how miserable have I made her! I have been the ruin of all who loved me—the ruin of my wife and children—the ruin of thee!—sad effect of vice! how dearly do I pay for my folly and madness!

Here he paused, and, I dare say, it is not difficult, Madam, for you to imagine the tender, the generous, the noble sentiments, the relation of this affecting concert produced. Methought there was something so heroic, so dutiful, and so disinterested in this part of his behaviour, that I could not help secretly applauding him. But now my father let me see that he was of the same opinion as myself, by openly discovering his sentiments: for Lucius no sooner gave him leave to speak, by a pause in which he seemed to recollect himself; than my father, as if eager to put him out of his pain, took hold of his hand, and giving it an affectionate shake, Generous youth, cried he, this was nobly done—You are more my son than ever. I shall think myself happy in being allied to a person of such worth. How greatly do these tears become you! this soft adoption of another's sorrow, this excess of humanity, which the savage mind cannot (or at least will not) feel, is the truest mark to know the brave, the generous heart by. Actions like these give a perfect insight into characters, and while they add a dignity to the highest station, they spread a lustre that can never be equalled by all the pride of wealth, the pomp of titles, or the false glitter of successful ambition. Dear Lucius! how happy will my daughter be in so worthy a husband!

This was uttered in that peculiar tone in which we always express ourselves when the full heart, burthened under its joy, breaks forth into an unrestrained transport, into elevated surprise and generous affection. While he spoke the tears started afresh into his eyes, and added an endearing tenderness to the smile of gladness which enlivened his countenance. His soul beamed in his looks, and discovered a mind softened, delighted, and raised above itself; while I dwelt upon each word he uttered, and, with a most charming ecstasy, assented to the justice of his praises. As to Lucius, he

he seemed all this while as if awaking from a trouble-some dream, while surprise, gratitude, and a modest joy, dispersed the clouds of despair which hung on his brow. He looked at my father, he looked at me; the same passions were visible in both our faces, only I fancy mine had an air of greater softness; he then turned his eyes again to my father, and pressing his hand, I am amazed, Sir, cried he, What can this goodness mean? Can you really propose to marry Felicia to a person without a fortune? to one sunk into indigence? Sure it is impossible? Have you forgot that our family depends upon my support? and can you resolve that Felicia's estate, instead of being augmented by her marriage, should be applied to remove foreign cares, and foreign wants?

Come, come, Lucius, returned my father, smiling, don't exaggerate the disadvantages of your circumstances. This last instance of filial piety shews a greatness of soul, that not only fills me with surprise, but extremely endears you to me. The better I know you, the more I admire your virtues; and to be as little behind you as possible, in point of generosity, I promise not only to consult your felicity, but the happiness of all that are dear to you. But pray proceed; for I long to know the conclusion of these affecting incidents.

Dear sir, cried the engaging youth, (with a sparkling joy swelling into rapture) dear Sir, teach me how to acknowledge your goodness; I would be grateful, yet cannot express my gratitude. My heart feels it all; feels it too sensibly to be expressed. O my dear, my lovely Felicia, cried he, arising hastily, running to me, and giving me an eager, affectionate embrace, while my father could not forbear laughing at this natural transport, this sudden impulse of affection, nor could I help being extremely delighted with it; with extasy he pressed my hand to his bosom, his eyes spoke unutterable things. But having indulged, for near a minute, this sudden transport of joy, he returned to his chair, and concluded the story of his father's misfortunes; but he neither sufficiently entered into the subject, nor dwelt, as before, upon the most melting circumstances. His own past sorrow and his father's were swallowed up

by

FELICIA TO CHARLOTTE. 169

by the joy of the present moment. He told us, that after many arguments, his father at last consented to his proposal, but not without the severest reproaches upon the madness of his own conduct. His creditors were sent for, when offering a handsome composition, which was readily accepted, their affairs were concluded the next day; and in short, that his misfortune, with the tenderness of Sophronia and Marilla, had wrought the most happy change in his conduct; a circumstance which, as it gave Lucius the highest pleasure, he mentioned with peculiar satisfaction.

As soon as he had done, my father renewed the friendships he had given him of his affection, and proposed to use his endeavours to make us as happy as possible; so that before dinner we were more firmly united than ever. What a delightful change in our affairs! In two days more my circumstances and manner of life will be changed, so that when I write next, you will find me in a different class of mortals; but in whatever state I am, if you do me justice, you will believe me to be,

Unalterably yours,

FELICIA.

F I N I S.



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